

STUDIES IN MODERN INDIAN AESTHETICS

S. K. NANDI





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STUDIES IN AMERICAN INDIAN RELIGIOUS

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To

*Sri Dharma Vira
for his unfailing sympathy
for the cause to which
I am committed*

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Preface

Modern Indian aesthetics meant for us Indian aesthetic ideas as formulated by people born after 1861, the year of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore. All such meridians are arbitrary and we thought that modern Indian aesthetics could be considered to have its starting point in Rabindranath Tagore. The ancient Indian world of ideas on art and aesthetics often peeped through Tagore's ideas and there have been occasional parallels. Sri Aurobindo and Abanindranath Tagore also came very close to the ancient Indian aesthetic ideas and as such they came close to one another. The objective concept of beauty, the idea of *parama sundara*, repeatedly occurred in them and often they came very near the Platonic idea. Sri Aurobindo, true to his philosophical discipline, often gave wonderfully subtle parallels of Indian and Greek thought and his ideas of *cittasuddhi* as done by art have aptly matched the idea of *Kathasis* as found in the sacramental synonym of the Greek mysteries. Brojendranath Seal's aesthetics was mostly dominated by Hegelian ideas and of course, in his unpublished autobiography, we come across some references to Indian aesthetic thought as found in Indian classics, ancient or medieval. In the analysis of the ideas of these four thinkers we have followed very care-

fully the traces of classic ideas, both Indian and Western, wherever they have been found relevant and modern parallels have been cited whenever they needed such a citation.

The meaning and function of art as understood by the modern Indian thinkers will not be very different from the significance of art as formulated in the ancient Indian aesthetics. We will not fail to notice that art as "the soul of play and the soul of joy" as conceived in ancient texts of India, is not much different from the *lilā* theory as understood by Abanindranath and others. The *Nāṭya Śāstra* was syncretic in essence and eclectic in appearance. It is said that Brahma distilled the essence of the Vedas and created the *Nāṭya Veda*, by taking words from the *Rgveda*, gestures from the *Yajur Veda*, music from the *Sama Veda* and *rasa* from the *Atharva Veda*. Brahma told the gods and the goddesses that through art (dance drama, to be specific) was expressed what was beautiful and charming in the world of matter and in the world of mind. Art would engender in all beings joy and love, righteousness, self-control and heroism; it would delineate the totality of life, it would convey a knowledge of life and super-life; it would satisfy the impulse of play and the impulse of joy; it would remove the disharmonies and the agonies of life; and it generally took away the burden of work and toil from all beings and would endow them with a sense of wonder and delight. These ideas as we find here in the germinal stage grew in stature with the passing of time and in modern Indian aesthetics we find some of these ideas worked out in great detail. Some have been taken up very seriously and examined with the meticulous care that they deserved. Others have been relegated to the backwaters as they were not important in a modern context. We will notice this phenomenon in the pages to follow. It would be quite interesting to note that society was a living organism and it lived through the ages with all its ideas, emotions, and

work-bias growing and dying at the same time and thus leaving a "remainder". This "remainder" bears significant traces of the different periods of human history and a careful analysis reveals a process of growth and development. This is patent when judged historically. This becomes evident through a citation of parallels when considered analytically.

The entire problem in aesthetics centres around the pivotal notion of "expression" vis-a-vis suggestiveness, *vyañjanā*. If art expresses, does it express the intuition of the artist or is expression synonymous with intuition? This content consideration leads us to the formulation of the idea of the "absolute" content as found in the ancient Indian aesthetics. Art became divinity-oriented and numerous examples of this idea are strewn all over the land in her thousand and one ancient places of worship. But that was not the whole story. Relative art contents, contents invested with *tucchata* (as understood in ordinary parlance usage) have also been enshrined in beautiful forms and they are making those "contents" extraordinary and significant. This reference to absolute content leads one to the postulation of the concept of delight or *ānanda* as understood in the Upanishadic context. But secular aesthetics of today looks upon this aesthetic joy as a mere psychological phenomenon divested of all ontological or metaphysical significance. This trend is empirical in character and gives a new dimension to the problem as understood in ancient Indian aesthetics. Our attempt has been to meet these challenges in the light of the ideas as formulated mainly by Rabindranath Tagore, Brojendranath Seal, Sri Aurobindo, Abanindranath Tagore, and a host of other kindred spirits, whose positions have been cited as parallels. The method followed herein has been one of analysis. And this analytical method has been supplemented by historico-comparative method, keeping in view their compatibility in a given context. In the pages to follow, we will find that this "con-jointed

methodology" has done some good in deciphering the meaning and significance of a particular aesthetic system by careful analysis and again supplementing this analysis by parallels for a fuller understanding of the problems involved. Thus the method of investigation has been new to cope with a new analytico-synthetic outlook on life and art.

In the four chapters of the present work, we propose to discuss the aesthetic theories of Rabindranath Tagore, Brojendranath Seal, Sri Aurobindo and Abanindranath Tagore. Elsewhere we propose to discuss the aesthetic theories of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Nandalal Bose along with the aesthetic ideas of their less known contemporaries. This scheme was conceived as a monolithic unitary scheme, when I was working as a Senior Fellow, at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, at the instance of Dr. Niharranjan Ray. The intention was to do the work in a single volume and my indolence and procrastination forced me to divide the book into two volumes; to this end I completely resign myself and consider this partition to be pre-determined and a matter of fait accompli.

I thank my friends and colleagues, without making a particular mention of anyone of them, who helped and inspired me in this job of a research worker. My stay at Simla (where I did most of the writing of this book) was made pleasant by my wife, Leena and pleasanter still by Dhriti, my daughter and I thankfully remember them at this hour when the book has been made ready for the press.

S. K. NANDI

CHAPTER I

Aesthetics of Rabindranath Tagore

RABINDRANATH Tagore's principle of explanation in aesthetics is the principle of expression and it is meta-psychological in character. Expression is ultimately the expression of *ānanda* and an act of expression is as much an occasion for spiritual enjoyment. Psychologically viewed, the calm of mind (when all passions are spent) is the ground for this enjoyment. This state of enjoyment is an active state of mind; it is neither a passive nor a vacuous state. Aesthetic enjoyment being a state of active enjoyment does not turn Tagore an aesthetic hedonist like George Santayana. His concept of *līlā* is spiritual in character. Explanations of the nature of aesthetic values such as beauty and truth are essentially psycho-metaphysical in character and their identification baffles all verification. This identity is a form of mystic identity which is not amenable to the categories of ordinary logical thinking.

A consistent philosophy of art of Tagore has been attempted in the following pages. But we undertake the task with some diffidence as art has got to be distinguished from the philosophy of art and they are two types of disciplines. to start with. It is possible to philosophise on art without being an artist, as contrariwise, one may contribute to real art without any clear and conscious comprehension of its nature or essence. The two, the poet and the philosopher, and the aesthetic and the critic, can be identified in a higher synthesis and that synthesis is perhaps attainable on a mystic plane. This mystic plane was not unknown to Tagore. For the preponderance of this mystic element, Tagore was sometimes described as romantic. He valued the mystic union of the human soul with the Universal Spirit and declared their identity in no uncertain terms. On this

plane of mystic union all contraries and opposites got united in one whole and when judged from this viewpoint of the whole, all unities and identities became a possibility.

In the pages to follow we may note that :

1. Tagore's conception of art was intuition-expression oriented.
2. It had some ontological significance apart from the formal qualities ; like divine creation, aesthetic creation was not prompted by necessity or compulsion. But it had its own inevitability.
3. It was freedom-oriented and consequently showed a preference for values which were evolutionary in character. It had a past and a traceable future.
4. The aesthetic intuition-expression covered the entire panorama of the artist's mind, i.e. the sub-conscious and the conscious mind of the artist. This has a particular reference to his paintings.
5. In this principle of expression resided *ānanda* and through it self-realisation was possible. Aesthetic delight was the delight for self-expression and consequently of self-realisation. In a word, creation was all joy, both in the meta-physical and the psychological sense.
6. Through the concept of 'humanized nature', Tagore tells us that art helps deepening of world consciousness and of self-consciousness as well. Art is the expression of the essential nature of man ; this essential nature being his whole nature, will express the world outside.

The value of art, to Tagore, lay in the fact that art brings nature close to man and enables him to establish an intimacy, a blood relationship with all that strikes him as alien or unfriendly in his quotidian existence. He wanted to realise the Infinite in and through the finite and in this respect he was a Vedantist.*

*Śaṅkara said: "*Yadā hi nāma-rūpe na vyākryete tadāsyā ātmano nirupādhiḥ rūpaṃ prajñānaghanākhyam na pratikhyāyeta. Yadā punaḥ kāryakāraṇātmanā nāma-rūpe vyākṛte bhavāstadā asya rūpaṃ pratikhyāyeta*".

He could also be looked upon as an inveterate 'romantic' to use the word in the sense given to it by J. E. Hulme,¹ suggesting that romanticism confused both human and divine things by not clearly separating them. In the principle of romantic indivisibility, which had been branded as 'mystic fusion' by some when they postulated their initial dichotomy, lay the principle of reconciliation of apparent diversities and inconsistencies in Tagore. That is why evaluation of Tagore as an artist and as a philosopher* (of art) has been very fascinating.

According to some, Tagore in his versatile capacities, is not only a great artist but is also a great critic. Tagore has been mentioned in the same breath with Goethe, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley. But it is no distortion of truth if we hold that Tagore is an artist in the first instance, and only secondarily a critic of art. Yet an artist who takes to philosophising on the nature of art may be on surer ground than one who philosophises on art without being able to produce real art. But the artist and the critic in Tagore did not always agree on vital aesthetic problems and often they came to loggerheads.² One may easily find observations on art and literature by Tagore, the critic, contradicting the observations or intuitions of Tagore, the poet. But these *prima facie* inconsistencies observable in Tagore may be reconciled through an attempt to synthesise the impersonal and the absolute ways of putting things, which is truly Indian, and the devotional and concrete style of expression, which is the fruit of Bengali culture.³

Herein we propose to attempt at a synthesis of the poet and the philosopher in Tagore; as Tagore was not a logic chopper and his conclusions were not based on strict logical sequences,

*(If names and forms were not manifested, Brahman's unconditioned nature as a homogeneous mass of consciousness would not have been revealed. When, however, names-and-forms are manifested in the world of causes and effects, its nature stands revealed.) Tagore's status as a philosopher is unquestionable. His works like *The Religion of Man*, *Sādhana*, *Personality*, *Śāntiniketan* are philosophical *pur sang* and give us a clear and complete philosophy. His writings on the philosophy of art give us a system of aesthetics as well. (See S. N. L. Shrivastava, "The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore" in *Aryan Path*, August, 1967.)

he had to largely depend on his poetic insight to delve deeper into mysteries of things and beings. His mystic vision so far transcended the bounds of ordinary logical thinking and the philosopher in him had to go hand in hand with the poet in him on all occasions. We shall notice this recurring phenomenon in due course. Wherever there was any deviation of the poet from the philosopher in Tagore, it was not so much the poet who differed from the philosopher but it was the later philosopher differing from the earlier philosopher in Tagore. Where he adduces bad logic, the philosopher in him had to be blamed. The poet does not come in for criticism when, for example, he seeks to explain the universality of art through the concept of universal humanity or *Viśva-mānava-sattā*. In this sense, the two should not be taken as identical. Consequently, we do not agree with people who hold that the philosopher and the poet in Tagore are one and identical⁴ for all purposes. A logical analysis does not warrant this identity. On the mystic plane where such an identity becomes a reality, the philosopher turns into a mystic poet and is no more a philosopher in the sense of a metaphysician whose business is to offer ultimate principles of explanation, amenable to rational thinking. In this sense, the philosopher is ratiocinative, cogitative, and argumentative and as such his methodology is somewhat different and distinct from that of the poet. But his total vision of truth and beauty may be attained through insight or intuition or by both. It is not uncommon to find the poet turning a mystic, and mystic philosophy is quite common both in the East and in the West. The Sufis and the Bauls of Bengal are instances in point and while Sufism compares favourably with Vedanta, the Baul songs decidedly influenced Tagore's poetic outlook and insight as also his philosophy of life.

A contemporary⁵ of Tagore notes this mystic element in Tagore when he expounds Tagore's philosophy of life thus : In an age when Reason was considered the highest light given to man, Tagore pointed to the vision of the mystics as always the greater light ; when man was elated with undreamt of worldly success, puffed up with incomparable material possessions and powers, Tagore's voice rang clear and emphatic in

tune with the cry of the ancients : "what shall I do with all this mass of things, if I am not made immortal by that ?" When men, in their individual as well as collective egoism, were scrambling for earthly gains, he held before them vaster and clearer horizons, higher and nobler ways of being and living and maintained the sacred sense of human solidarity, the living consciousness of the Divine, one and indivisible. When the Gospel of Power had all but hypnotized men's minds, and Superman or God-man had come to be equated with the Titan, Tagore saw through the falsehood and placed in front of everything else the ancient and eternal varieties of love and self-giving, harmony and mutuality, sweetness and light. This mystic philosophy of Tagore, a supra-logical approach to the values and problems of life influenced his thoughts on art and aesthetics as well. That is how one may dent holes in the aesthetics of Tagore through a purely logical approach. But a supra-logical understanding, an intuitive apprehension of the problems will remove all these apparent inconsistencies. So the first postulate in our review of Tagore's aesthetic ideas is : Mysticism and poetry were quite compatible and from this point of view Tagore's definition of art as *māyā* could be defended. Dr. Radhakrishnan, while discussing Tagore's philosophy argued in defence of the compatibility of mysticism and poetry.⁶ According to him they are not incompatible, and he cites Dante, Goethe, the authors of the Upaniṣads, and many of the classical religious poets of Asia as instances in point. Tagore, in his *Citrā*,⁷ *Gītānjali*,⁸ *Gītimālya*,⁹ *Gītali*,¹⁰ *Naivēdyā*,¹¹ *Kheyā*,¹² and many other poetical works, has spoken of this mystic relation with God, nature and the world of things and beings. The mystic Bāuls of Bengal influenced his thought pattern to a considerable extent. However, Tagore was not alone in combining mysticism with poetry, but was yet another star in the galaxy of mystic poets whose talents will never be questioned.

Mysticism and Subjective Philosophy

Like most of the mystics, Tagore believed in a subjective philosophy of art. His writings on the philosophy of art show

the brilliance of an intellectual and the insight of a true artist. Intellectualism and mysticism as found in Tagore may find a parallel in Tennyson. It has been said :¹³

“Mysticism of a *certain* kind is an inseparable and indigenous feature of the intellectual school, of which Mr. Tennyson is the chiefest apostle and the truly representative man ; and it is not with the intention of finding fault with it that the subject is here introduced for we do not hold that in his case we can have him without it, or that in him it amounts to a real mischief. Some of his creations, such as the ‘Lady of Shalott’ and the ‘Lotus Eaters’ from which all human element has been nearly drained away, possess an ethereal beauty of such gossamer consistency as to be just within the possibility of conception . . .”.

For Tagore as well, this “consistency” (chandas or harmony) was the keynote of all his creations and that is how he could discount objective faithfulness in art. There was no “thin-in-itself” (cf. Kant) for Tagore as he thought that truth and beauty were subject-dependent. The whole universe centred round the poet and even God had to come down from his seventh heaven to meet the poet half-way. But this duality ultimately led to a feeling of oneness with this¹⁴ “great o’her” and Tagore turns a monist. Cousins notes this monism in Tagore. He has a vision of the cosmic unity in which everything from the dust to the galaxy is held together and the impulse in the individual to fulfil its unity by breaking away from the separations (*ahamkāra*) of life in time and space, was always with him. In the joy of unity of his own spirit with the Cosmic Spirit whose rhythmic ecstasy creates changes and recreates the Universe, Rabindranath sang of the life within as well as of the life without as his own. . . . Morally speaking, the constant effort of his life was the attainment of physical purity and truth, selfless desires and ideal actions. These, be it noted, are not separate qualities of which one or two may be fostered and the others left in abeyance according to personal taste or convenience. They are the four sides of the perfect square of human life. They are not separate, though conditions of communication through speech in time and space make it necessary to express them separately. This principle of unity was the central principle of Tagore’s philosophy.¹⁵ Besides his will

to live man has an inner urge to unite with the world at large. Under this instinctive urge he does not wish to divide the world into fragments but eagerly wants to draw the whole of it into his heart and soul. He wants to possess it and realise it within his own being. This preference for the "whole" as evident in Tagore's moral philosophy was also not missing in his aesthetics. The concept of the upanishadic *bhūmā* might have inspired him to this total vision.

Man has many desires; one of them is to desire the fish for eating. But there is a higher kind of desire, the desire for union (*sāhitya*) with the universe, the desire to combine the ending day, gloriously lit by the sun-set by the river side with his mind and soul. This desire of union means the freeing of oneself from one's own inner obstacles. His unity-consciousness is quite compatible with the semantic¹⁶ significance of the Sanskrit (Bengali as well) word *sāhitya*. The root of the word is *sahita*, meaning "to be with". Tagore tells us that from *Sahita*, comes the word *sāhitya*. So if the root meaning is considered, we find a sense of union in the word *sāhitya*. For Tagore, literature reflects man's innate yearning for union with the world at large which comprises all things and living beings. In this union, Tagore believed, the individual man forgot all his particular interests which were more or less organic in character. Our interest in the objects of the Universe for their own sake is of a finer kind and called by some western aesthetics (e.g. Kant, Schopenhauer, Bradley) "disinterested contemplation of things". When man is selfishly alone and separated from the rest of creation in his narrow self-gratificatory pursuits, he is really deprived of a great joy. The worldly man, who means business is thus a loser; even an intellectual is no exception; but when a man of feeling, "who watches and receives", mingles his heart and soul with the vast universe around him, expresses his wonderful experience of union and self-enlargement, it is art or literature. In the mad search after worldly gains (i.e. in our practical life), man disintegrates his universe and is deprived of pure delight. This pure delight or joy could be found through intuition in a sense of oneness and unison with the Universe as a harmonious whole and is bodied forth into different forms of art and literature. Tagore in his

reference to different forms of human activity comes close to Benedetto Croce, the noted Italian philosopher of art. They both agree that truth and beauty are subject-dependent. However, we may refer to Croce's ideas of different types of human activity to make the position of Tagore clearer.

Tagore, Croce, Einstein, and Rolland

In Croce, we have the objectivistic view of spiritual life as objective self-fulfilment through objectified self-expression. The life of the spirit, according to Croce, is unceasing self-objectification as intuition-expression of the spirit's inner "sentimental tumult", the spirit's *a priori* aesthetic synthesis of feeling and imagination, the intuition or objectified expression of its inner stirrings. But intuition is only the first stage of spiritual fruition; the satisfaction which it brings is that of successful expression. So, in a way. Croce hyphanated expression and satisfaction while Tagore used "beauty-joy" in another context. For Tagore, this joy (*ānanda*) was transcendental in character while for Croce the joy was purely empirical and psychical. For Croce, epistemologically speaking, this joy is the handmaid of expression and this aesthetic expression passes on to perception, the next stage in the whole epistemical process. With this satisfaction of expression appears a new desire, that of the intellect to know, i.e. to sort and classify the image-expression as reality. Thus intuition passes over into perception, i.e. into the knowledge of reality. In this way the *a priori* aesthetic synthesis becomes a new synthesis, i.e. an *a priori* logical synthesis of representation and categorisation, of judgment through the relation of subject and predicate, which is the knowledge of a fact as the particularisation of a universal, the perception of the image as reality. Even logical synthesis, according to Croce, does not represent the last stage; with the satisfaction of knowledge, appears yet another dissatisfaction, the desire for action. With the appearance of knowledge, in short, appears also the consciousness of value, every new reality known generating a new ideal possibility and a new sense of value, with new concomitant aspirations, desires, and longings of the soul.

Thus in Croce's new-idealism we have a repetition of the objective view of the spirit as a necessary circular movement; from objectified expression through reality and ideal aspirations to objectivity again, the process continuing without end, the endless progression of the spiritual life towards objective fruition. This idea of de-subjectification as we find in Croce may also be traced in Tagore, who considered intuition-expression to be the primary aesthetic fact. In this artifact, Tagore discovered all the processes considered by Croce as distinct. Tagore's view on art as a response of man's total personality, his concept of expression involving self-objectification and self-realisation, comprises Crocean tenets and transcends them as well. Tagore's reality-consciousness in art is of a superior order. Truth and Beauty on ultimate analysis are identical for Tagore. Art for him is also moral. So in a way Tagore's idea of art as self-objectification included the idea of self-consciousness. reality-consciousness self being the ultimate reality), and the consciousness of good i.e. moral consciousness. As a subjective idealist, Tagore agreed with Einstein that had there been no human beings the Apollo of Belvedere would no longer be beautiful. They both held that beauty was subjective. But Einstein, though his logic failed him, told Tagore that truth, unlike beauty, was not subject-dependent; it was objective and independent of the subject. But the scientist pleaded his inability to prove his contention: "I cannot prove that my conception is right but that is my religion". Thus, one of the foremost scientists of the day took refuge under cover of religion when he was unable to prove that there was an extramental something, which we might call truth. Tagore, in his dialogue with Einstein had proved himself a tough logician adhering to the conclusions on strictly logical ground. His idea of truth as subjective is quite consistent with his concept of "Rūpér Truth", as Truth understood in relation to human consciousness. It leads to a transcendental principle of explanation in the idea of *ānanda*, as borrowed from the Upaniṣds. The illusive character of art, its multi-dimensional references, lead Tagore to the conclusion that art is indefinable. It "never tries to conceal its evasiveness, it mocks its own definition". That is true, and that is why people differ so much in their definitions

and determinations of the functions of poetry and art. Tagore's enunciation of this position are: art's indefinability influenced his junior contemporaries and we may notice similar ideas in their writings. A poet-cum-critic, for example, in his book¹⁷, speaks of this 'uncertainty' about the function of poetry, and says, it is due to the nature of poetry itself. Tagore is conscious of this illusive nature of art and poetry; that is why he calls art *māyā** and holds that it only seems to be what it is.

The many dimensions that are attributable to art include a spiritual dimension, art being considered a spiritual activity. This dimension becomes all-pervasive on ultimate analysis. Tagore takes art to be a form of spiritual activity, inspired by a will to create. He considers it to be a fundamental and basic propensity in man. Rolland readily agrees with Tagore that it is the activity of the spirit in man that makes poetry possible. This belief, as we see in Jean Christopher,¹⁸ led Rolland to denounce an idle life as incompatible with artistic aspirations. Spirit is essentially active. Activity is its very nature. "The concrete reality of the spirit consists in its ceaseless activity". Art is an autonomous expression of spirit preceding the logical concept in time, but not in dignity. Tagore in his *Religion of Man*¹⁹ speaks thus of this creative activity: "A gigantic creative endeavour built up its triumph in stupendous carvings, defying obstacles that were overwhelming. Such heroic activity over the greater part of the Eastern continent clearly answers the question, 'What is art?' It is the response, 'let us repeat', of man's creative soul to the call of the Real". This "response" is heroic activity and it had to surmount the obstacles it came across.

*Here *māyā* does not signify illusion. In the present context Tagore does not propose to deny the reality of art but its ultimacy. In fact *māyā* as a general principle of explanation as understood by the Vedantists, does not make out that the world is non-existent, that it is an unreal world and he individual psychological selves are absolutely false. What is denied by the doctrine of *māyā* is not the reality of the world but its ultimacy. Out explanation of Tagore's use of the word *Māyā* in the context quoted above has been on this line. But when Tagore considers art as having some ontological significance, that characterisation of art as *māyā* would be inappropriate.

So Tagore seems to suggest that an idler's life is incompatible with the avocation of an artist. The spirit in man responds to the spirit eternal and they are identical on ultimate analysis. This response is art. Similarly, Hegel²⁰ defines art as the "Absolute mediating itself in the consciousness of the finite as an objective sensuous image; it is the self-concretion of the Absolute as the form of the artistic object; the Absolute objectifying itself to sense as symmetry or harmony of sensible form". Hegel's definition denies any content to art in the sense of extra-mental matter and this is quite consistent with his basic philosophical position. As a consistent idealist he can hardly admit of the existence of any reality other than spirit. In art, spirit is essentially active, and this has also been pointed out by Dr. Radhakrishnan²¹ in his exposition of Tagore's philosophy of art. He holds that poetry is nature idealised, and that as art it is as distinct from nature as naturalistic poetry is from true poetry. The former requires mere observation*: the latter demands meditation on the material observed. If it requires mere observation, and no meditation, it is no better than an exact reproduction of nature. A reproduction can never be artistic. Art is the handiwork of spirit. Thus we find that the activity of the spirit draws the distinction between true poetry and naturalistic poetry. Naturalistic poetry is vitiated by the mimesis of Plato, and that is why Plato²² decries the artists and poets who merely copy nature.

Art as Expression : Primary Aesthetic Fact

In Tagore's view, art is expression. Tagore's principle of expression is not merely a psychological one; it is meta-psychological. Beauty, presupposed a sense of kinship, being one with the universe or the outside world; this *tādātmya* led to the self-realisation, both for the artist and the critic. This self-realisation again presupposed a type of identity of nature and man, the like of which we have found in Tagore and in the Upaniṣads

*We do not believe that observation *per se* was at all possible and as such the distinction between Naturalistic poetry and poetry as such can hardly be maintained on that score.

and the Vedanta. This identity was not difficult to establish. According to the metaphysical theory of Vedanta, which Tagore followed in some respects, there is nothing in the Universe but our self; anything is dear to us when we find our self in it, and to a mystic everything is dear, for he sees nothing as other than his self. The duality for him was for the purpose of sport, or *līlā*, and this was spiritual in character. Tagore's aesthetic theory may similarly be characterised to be of spiritual character. We may note in the lines to follow that Tagore, in accepting the idea of aesthetic joy as *Brahmāsvādasahodara* considered art as reflecting the infinite metaphysical depth of the Universe and at the same time found this "depth" in little fragmentary human experiences. He recognised that the facts of life, though fragmentary, may suggest or express the all comprehensive truth and a little sensuous form *rūpa* may participate in essential beauty. Tagore says that the spirit in man assimilates the joys and sorrows of life, which are then woven into the texture of his being. They are in turn, desubjectified in art and the man,²³ as artist, expresses his subjective reactions to his objective environment.

The content of art comes from without, and art has to incorporate that much of outside material. But it is patent that this material, though lying outside is not independent of the artist. Tagore's idea of expression includes the content to be expressed and as such he is not a formalist in art. His idea of reality in art is Truth as related to the poet's imagination. That point has been made amply clear when Tagore quotes the famous aphorism²⁴ of Keats "Truth is beauty" and tells us that this "truth" refers to human imagination and not to an exact correspondence as found in Science. This is relative to human understanding. So artistic expression is of this "relative". Without this expression, art fails to communicate the inmost reactions of the poet to his environment. In his paper entitled the "Religion of an Artist"²⁵ Tagore writes: "Things are distinct not in their essence but in their appearance; in other words, in their relation to the one to whom they appear. This is art, the truth of which is not in substance or logic, but in expression". So Tagore seeks to make three points :

- (a) Essentially the Universe as a whole is one as it is spiritual in character ;
- (b) art is appearance and as such relative ; and
- (c) the truth in art is that of expression and not of correspondence with the nature-in-itself.

Expression being the expression of personality (wherein the entire Universe is reflected) is not just a formal concept. Expression in his own sense, can be the whole truth about art. But Tagore, like the neo-idealists and others, accepts the meaning of expression as divorced from its content-reference and declares that expression as such is not the whole truth of art; it is only the primary truth. He considers expression to be neither the final truth about art, nor its ultimate significance.²⁶ Again he tells us : "But this is to be admitted, that the primary and the main requisite for literature is that it should be well expressed. Literature may even do without glorious ideas, but it cannot exist without being expressed. A stunted plant may still be called a plant, but a seed cannot be so called". In the lines quoted, we again find Tagore's emphasis has been shifting to expression. We consider that Tagore's idea of reality in art could fit in well with his idea of expression as expressing the self of the artist and the other as reflected and incorporated in the artist's self. But Tagore as we have said is not always consistent with his earlier professions and he does not hesitate to say that expression was the primary aesthetic fact. If expression is denied the status of the "whole truth" in art, we may compare such a position with the position of Croce²⁷. Croce denies talent if there is no expression of it. In Croce's view, if one is unable to express one-self, there is nothing in one to express. The "mute inglorious Milton" of Gray²⁸ is a myth to him for he identifies intuition and expression, and intuition-expression is the only aesthetic fact. Tagore also gives so much importance to expression as to deny any talent whatsoever to the mute artist. He who lacks expression lacks what makes a true artist. Tagore's scepticism about silent poetry is well expressed in the following lines : "Unuttered poetry, self-contained expression, are two unmeaning phrases that have gained currency in certain quarters.

But to call a person a poet who may be gazing at the sky in rapture as silent as the sky itself is like giving the name of fire to a piece of wood that is not alight. Poetry is expression : what is or is not silently passing through a person's mind matters little to others outside it". We think that Tagore believes in the expression as the whole aesthetic fact and this position is quite consistent with how he defines the nature of art as expression of the total personality of the artist as participating in the nature of universal man. Again Tagore's idea of the spiritual identity of man and the world at large and art being the expression of this spiritual essence leads us to suggest that Tagore is a believer in expression as the whole truth in art.

Expression in the Limited Sense: Content of Art

Without insisting on this point too much, we may follow Tagore in his idea of expression as the primary truth and see where it leads to. Expression considered as the primary truth in art leaves quite a big room for the flourishing content presupposing a dichotomy between the form and the content of art as absolute. May be, he is unconsciously influenced by the "art for life's sake" dictum and wants to see life in its variety reflected in art. So he refuses to be satisfied with expression as such and wants to see how life is reflected, how the ideas and ideals are incorporated in the very texture of the artifact. As a realist (in the western academic sense) he wants to see how the "real world" is refracted by an art-work. (We may note that though, according to us, Tagore was a realist in art, his reaction was quite different from the British academic type of realism and this point would be clearer as we proceed along with this essay.) In *Sāhityé Pathé* he is quite pronounced in this affirmation of expression as enjoying the status of the "primary aesthetic fact" only. Although his specific reference there is to literature, we may safely extend it to art in general without affecting Tagore's intention in any way. To quote him : "The primary truth about literature is its expression, but its ultimate truth is expression of man as a complex of sense organs, mind and spirit. We do not only see that there

is expression but also how much is expressed". This assertion tilts the balance in favour of art-content. But this tilting is short-lived. Again, he reverts to the other end and tells us that expression is everything. To quote him again: "Either through one's own joys and sorrows or through those of others, or through creation of human characters men must be expressed. All else are means only".²⁹ So we find that Tagore seems to be undecided on this issue and it appears that his "intuitive apprehension" is not a sure guide in this controversy. As such he seeks a compromise and wants to effect a balance of the two, expression and what is to be expressed. Here we may point out that what is expressed is never known without this expression. The former is unknown and unknowable without the latter. So in the present context, this emphasis on content does not indicate a change in his basic idea of the importance of expression in art. In fact, Tagore's alternate emphasis on form and content of art suggests that both are equally important and in fact they are so very well united and fused together that Tagore sometimes calls the unity as content and emphasises the content as such. Again, the indivisible unity sometimes appears to him to be a formal quality and he stresses the importance of form. But in reality, he believes in a fusion, in the unity of the two and they have been described in terms of this inherent unity. Tagore's ideas in point influenced his contemporaries and we may note the views of one of them. N. K. Gupta³⁰ tells us that it is not only a synthesis, arbitrary and imposed from outside, that make a true work of art what it is, but it is the complete unity (Tagore calls it fusion) of content and form, an internal and organic unity that lends all the beauty and charm to a good specimen of art. Their "ultimate unity and for that a sort of identity", according to Gupta, make all true art. Extremism in either direction makes bad art and this does not survive the test of time. The art of Oscar Wilde in England, of Pierre Lowys of France, and of the artists of the closing decades of the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine eras, may be taken as instances in point. Too much stress either on form or content makes bad art. That is the view of Tagore

as well ; a fusion can bring out the pulse that throbs and makes art a living emblem of human imagination.

This idea of totality leads Tagore to postulate the "unity of content and form" in art and the total human personality as the possible content of art. Iago's "motiveless malignity" is his own and is characterised by his total character. So Tagore takes the totality of human character in this sense. And that is why we hold that though Tagore ranks expression as the "primary truth" about literature, he means that it is whole truth. This expression should be the expression of a totality, i.e. the total human personality as expressed through a particular phenomenon. So Tagore demands the total human personality to be the subject of expression and the subject matter of all kinds of literature : "The chief indication of literature consists in its relationship with human life. Where does the mental life of a man reside ? It is there where our intelligence, will, and taste work harmoniously together; in a word, where resides the essential man. It is there that literature is born". So here Tagore speaks of the whole man; the entire gamut of psychical activities, i.e. thinking, feeling and willing, are reflected in the art-work. Emotional apprehension of things is a form of awareness and in this awareness the totality is cognized. The discursive reason does not compartmentalize in art; the whole emotive content of the art-work appears as a *gestalt* wherein the content and the form completely merge and blend into a totality, into one whole, indistinguishable in its aspects or parts. In an aesthetic context the poet's personality and the nature outside do not stand opposed to each other but they supplement each other and stand as complementary. In fact Tagore does not posit a duality between man and nature and he believes in a type of Upanishadic pantheism which can be more aptly described as panentheism. His idea of the ultimate unity of spirit as immanent in nature and in man, and the identity of this finite spirit and the infinite spirit is the corner stone of his philosophy. Thus in this context his idea of humanised nature deserves to be noted carefully.

Humanised Nature in Tagore's Aesthetics

The point is quite debatable whether we can characterise Tagore's Philosophy as anthropocentric. But in so far as we are concerned with the aesthetic ideas of Tagore, we may consider it to be subject-centric and as such it can be branded as anthropocentric. The God-man identity in Tagore has been considered by some as mystic and this type of mysticism as we find in Tagore is quite consistent with a type of intellectualism that has been noted by many modern critics.³¹ Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal notes this type of mysticism in Tagore and that is why he does not like Tagore being branded as "mystic" by Yeats and others, as they failed to note this special type of mysticism in Tagore. However, Tagore believes in a continuum starting from the divinity converging on man and then passing on to nature. This trilogy becomes a duopoly³² when we consider God to be immanent in nature and our problem centres round discovering identity between nature and man. This identity involves :

- (a) A total vision akin to Spinoza's looking at things sub-specie aeternitatis.
- (b) A principle of joy which may be compared to the all-consuming Upaniṣadic concept of *Ānandādhyēva Khalvimāni bhūtāni Jāyanté, Ānandéna jātāni Jivanti, Ānandaṁ prayantyaabhisamviśanti*.
- (c) A type of subjectivism which would have led to solipsism if he had not the Vedantic trend in his thought in identifying the Absolute and the empirical self, which again reflected itself in nature.
- (d) Idea of *lilā* as a means for self-realisation through self-expression. It is intimately connected with the so-called traditionalism and modernism in art and poetry and perpetually resuscitating art through the ages.

We may begin with the nature-man relation. According to Tagore the personality of man and the nature without are complementary and their relation is one of interaction. This

idea of the relation of interaction obtaining between man and his environment is not peculiar to Tagore. It is shared by many. We may quote one of them, i.e. Galloway: "The problem of evolution of man's psychical nature cannot be solved on purely individualistic lines. It is a law of the universe that isolation is incompatible with development: progressive evolution never takes place except where there is an interaction of elements. It is equally true of the lower world of organisms and of the higher world of psychical selves, that latent capacities are only called forth by the process of interaction". Man not only takes from society, he also contributes his quota to make society what it is. As the Upaniṣadic Ṛṣis discovered Joy in the whole, *bhūmā*,* so Tagore finds "good" in the totality. This totality comprises the plurality without negating their individual identity. Tagore calls it harmony and through this harmony the parts and the aspects get synthesised into a "whole". For Tagore, the idea of "good" involves this harmony and abundance and this harmony is there in the society in its different constituents; this harmony is there in an art object (and he calls it "sumiti"). Through this sense of harmony, the universe becomes one and the sense of discord, turning it into a multiverse, disappears. In this total vision, the evil disappears and in the abundance of its totality everything appears as good, as *ānandam*. This principle of abundance involved in Tagore's idea of the "good" is comparable to his idea of the "surplus" as involved in his idea of art. Tagore, on once being charged with plagiarism, retorted: "In the early hours of morning, when I commune with nature, her treasures are uncovered before me. Her immensely rich gifts are stored up in my bewildered heart and I can hardly express a negligible fraction of it in my creations".

It is not a one-way traffic, as has already been pointed out. The poet in his turn makes nature beautiful and charming: "I chance to look at the rose and call it 'beautiful'³³ and it be-

In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (7/24/1) *bhūmā* has been characterised as a state wherein we do neither see nor hear, nor know anything else other than Him; and that is the opposite of *bhūmā* wherein we see, hear and know the other.

comes beautiful". So we humanise nature and nature in its turn helps to develop our personality. Our contribution towards making nature what it is has been well explained by Tagore in the following lines : "My point is this ; the world of literature means a world in relationship with human life. We thus humanise great nature by mixing with it our joys and sorrows, hopes and desires; only then it becomes proper material for literature".³⁴ This process of humanising nature is unmotivated. It has no purpose of its own. It is unmotivated in the sense that there is no "necessity principle" involved in it. No feeling of want impels us to humanise nature. We do so because this is natural with all human beings; when we look at nature, we colour it instinctively. We see our own shapes and figures in nature and the suggestiveness as found in natural beauty is our own projection in nature. We invest the nature, Tagore tells us, with emotive meaning. Literature is cited by Tagore to be the vast playground where the artist can indulge in unfettered *lilā*. Tagore writes: "Man daily extends in literature the field of what is dear to him, that is the field of his clear realisation. Literature is the realm of his unresisted, strange and vast play, *lilā*."³⁵ In the state of realisation of an object a man is at one with it and his knowledge of it is also self-knowledge and his expression regarding it is also self-expression".

Psychologically, this identity of subject and object may be explained with the help of empathy. This "feeling into" by the reader makes the literary theme his own. Thus Tagore proclaims the identity of the creator and the appreciator in a way. Like the ancient Indian rhetoricians, Tagore also in his scheme of aesthetics admits both the creator and the appreciator in the context of *bhāva* and *rasa*. Thus literature may be said to reflect the human mind in all the three streams, i.e. thinking feeling and willing. It reflects both the individual mind and the collective mind. Without reflecting the collective or the social mind, art cannot become Universal. Tagore in fact thinks of universal mind as working through individual mind, while it is creating. Thus literature reflects not only the individual mind but the social mind as well. If we seek to know a nation closely and fully, we should read its literature. In literature man gives

his own introduction; in science and philosophy he scrupulously keeps himself aloof. To quote Tagore: "We are continually knowing this world with our mind".³⁶ That knowing is of two kinds. Through knowledge we know the object. In this, the knower is in the background and the object of knowledge in front of him, as his objective. Through intuition we know but ourselves, the object remains united with ourselves and is but an apparent objective. Science is occupied with the task of knowing an object and it struggles to keep back human personality from itself. In literature man is engaged in the work of knowing himself, the truth of his knowing rests on his actual realisation and not on the unity of any objective fact. Thus in literature he finds himself, discovers himself, and realises himself. In Tagore's literature we find the mundane world totally humanised and as such transmuted. The same thing happened with the music of Tagore. Nature as reflected in Tagore's songs has been completely humanised. Let us recollect what Indira Devi Choudhury³⁶ said in point. She wrote that as Tagore's tunes vary from the strictly classical to the frankly original, passing through all the phases of Baul, Kirtan and mixed, so does the wording of the songs include every emotion that naturally finds expression in music, ranging from the love of the Divine to the most delicate feeling recorded by the human heart (comparable to the Śrutis in our musical scale) and passing through every phase of love, which human nature is capable of. Love of nature finds a special place in Tagore's music and he has humanised and poetised the six seasons of the year in somewhat the same manner as the Rsis of old symbolised the five elements of physical nature. Human emotions stand completely depersonalised from the power and they are sharable by others in their own respective contexts of experience, completely divorced from the poet's particular experience references.

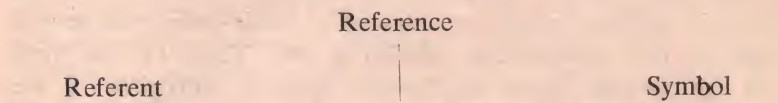
Tagore, though specifies the content of literature as distinctly humanised nature, does not dissolve the distinction of form and content and holds on to this traditional dichotomy. In the light of the above observation, this dichotomy was perhaps not maintainable. And in Tagore we find evidence of

disowning this dichotomy and the logical possibility of an identity was always present, we would rather call it non-duality instead of identity. Tagore was dimly aware of this logical possibility and that is evident from his idea of fusion of the content and form of art. We may point out that Croce did not like idea of fusion and he condemned it as eclecticism, taken in a derogatory sense. Of course, Tagore's vacillation is quite intelligible as the problem involved in doing away with the distinction between form and content in art was grounded in the more complex linguistic problem of significant-signified relation as stated by De Saussures or in the *śabda--artha* relation as found in ancient Indian semantics. The reference of an art-object or the referent (as intended by the artist)—which does an art-work lead to? If art has a language of its own, all the semantic problems which are relevant to *śabda-artha* relation will apply to this form-content relation in art. They, i.e. the form and the content, could be looked upon as indivisible if we believe with Bhartrhari³⁷ in a linguistic context that the sentence was a 'single integral symbol' (*eko' navayavās sābdaḥ*) which is revealed by the individual letters and the words that comprise it. The meaning thereby was thought to be conveyed by the *vākyasphota*, the sentence considered as an indivisible and linguistic symbol. And the meaning conveyed by it is an "instantaneous flash of insight or intuition" (*pratibhā*). The meaning here-in is also considered partless. The words have no reality of their own; they are only hints that help the listener to arrive at the meaning. So if this trend of argument is allowed in the discussion we would be obliged to accept the following:

- (a) The non-duality of form and content and the aesthetic significance as one "whole meaning" as intuited.
- (b) Appreciation as aesthetic significance was a matter of intuitive apprehension and intellect had not much to do with aesthetic appreciation.

In Tagore we come across observations and suggestions which uphold the above position. Again, as we have already noted he accepted the dichotomy of form and content and

laid emphasis on content, i.e. on "what was to be expressed". This position again involved the other side of the same semantic problem, i.e., does *śabda* really or objectively connote the *artha* and is there a necessary relation between them. In the aesthetic context we may simply ask "does the language of art convey the same meaning to all objectively". This may be studied with the help of Ogden Richard's basic triangle suggesting a relation between the significant and the signifie. An art-work does not convey the same meaning as intended by the artist to the reader or critic. The original meaning intended may be called Referent (as we find in the diagram³⁸ below) and the meaning understood by the reader may be termed as Reference.



By way of explanation of the diagram the authors remark: "Between the Symbol and the Referent there is no relevant relation other than the indirect one which consists in its being used by someone to stand for a reference. Symbol and Referent, that is to say, are not connected directly (when for grammatical reasons, we imply such a relation, it will merely be an imputed as offered to a real relation) but only indirectly round the two sides of the triangle". So we may say that the symbol, i.e. the art object could hardly directly connote the "referent" and it has got to go through the reference, i.e., the meaning as understood by the reader or critic. He cannot possibly come to the original meaning (Referent) intended by the artist. The relation between the symbol (art-work) and the referent is only imputed. It may be noted that the meaning of referent was intended to be the "object referred to" by the linguists who used that term but in our case, i.e. in an aesthetic context, the object referred to and the "originally intended meaning" are identical. So is a way the referent could alone be hinted at by the symbol and their distinction could not be done away with. It is difficult to assume that Tagore was

aware of all these difficulties involved in doing away with the distinction of form and content of art but he intuitively felt (and it is evident from his emphasis on the content of art), that content was essential for a symbol to convey. Without this content, the form of symbol lost much of its importance.

— Tagore's flare for the ideal and the transcendental often led him to formulate principles which were not positively verifiable. His psychological principles of explanation often crossed the bounds of empiricism as he sought to give us some psychometaphysical principles. There is such an occasion when Tagore specified the content and restricted it to such characters in man which were permanent. This concept of "permanence" was perhaps inspired by the older metaphysical concept of "substance" and it had also a moralistic bias with an admission of "higher and lower" in human character potentials. Tagore wanted the representative man to enter into the domain of art and to be made the subject matter of any artistic creation. He consciously excludes all semitic tendencies in man as unessential and transitory. In short, it seems that he does not want the expression of human personality in all its aspects to be the object of art; he wants only an embellished and selected side of human personality. Tagore seems to suggest that the higher personality devoid of its grosser elements is the proper theme of art. This "higher" has been linked up by Tagore with the element of ideality which is *a priori* in character. Tagore believes that man's essential nature is what he aspires to be. "Thus it is that whatever is great in man, whatever is permanent and he cannot exhaust through his actions, is captured in literature and this naturally builds up the nobler aspect of mankind". Knowing Tagore as we do, this explanation is a bit tilted with undue emphasis on one aspect. To say that art is concerned only with the higher and the universal elements in man hardly bears examination in the light of empirical evidence. So, in a way, Tagore suggests elsewhere that all patterns of human relations were fit objects of art whereas his observations quoted above do not bear out this position. We may overlook such inconsistencies in Tagore, as we must bear in mind that Tagore was essentially a creative thinker and not a student of logic, aiming

at rigid logical consistency. His thoughts on a particular issue evolved and one could notice distinct stages in this development. However, these so-called anomalies as found in a developing and evolving thought-process (as noticed in Bertrand Russell) are there in Tagore and they may be subsumed under a synoptic view of things.* In his noted essay "Modern Poetry", he speaks of spiritual beauty in human intercourse referred to above. Man's love is manifest in beauty for in both of them harmony rules. In *Gitanjali* and other poems his constant striving has been for unification with the rest of the world through love and there resided for him the principle of freedom in this unification principle.

*Yukto karo hé Sabār Sangé
Mukto karo hé bandha.*

To quote Tagore once again:

"The deepest feelings of a poet's heart strive to attain immortality assuming a lovely form in language. Love adorns itself. It seeks to prove its inward joy by its outward beauty. There was a time when humanity in its moments of leisure sought beauty in various ways that portion of the universe with which it came into contact. This outer adornment was the expression of its inner love". Where there is love, there can be no indifference and Tagore spoke of love in an aesthetic context to impress upon the reader the necessity of coherence and proportion (*sumiti*) in an art object. This proportion is too pronounced to be missed in the composition of a rainbow wherein all the colours are accommodated in their proper place and proportion. They could adjust themselves as, according to Tagore, they had love for one another and out of this love each one allowed the other to have its full play to make the whole what it was. The colours of the rainbow were the colours of

*Tagore himself gave us such a blanket principle of explanation and his all pervasive idea of spirit as expressing itself in man and nature virtually does away with the distinction of form and content, both being the handiwork of spirit.

love³⁹ and this concept of love was essential to understanding the harmony in a work of art. Tagore tells us that in days of early civilization, in the exuberance of his sense of beauty, man began to decorate articles of daily use. His inner inspiration was but creative power to his fingers. In every land and in every village household utensils and the adornment of the home and person bound the heart of man, in colour and form, to these outward insignia of life. Many were the ceremonies evolved by man for adding zest to social life; among them were the new melodies, new arts or crafts on wood or metal, clay and stone, silk, wool and cotton.... Arts then were a more necessary item. (Here we find Tagore characterising aesthetic principle in human life as a necessity principle.) Flower-garlands must be woven anyhow; young women knew how to paint the ends of their china silk saris; dancing was specially taught and was accompanied by lessons in the *Vīṇā*, the flute and singing. There was spiritual beauty then in human intercourse. So there was harmony in society and as such people lived in joy and had a sense of abundance. When Tagore speaks of modernity in literature, he speaks of a measure of delight which might be looked upon as the *sine qua non* of modern poetry. This aesthetic pleasure, this joy or delight marked the creation of true art. This was true both for the modern as well as of the traditional arts. Delight, being a subjective reaction, may be occasioned by any stimulus, be it modern or traditional. But a modern man is expected to derive this delight from a modern work of art and this expectation was shared by Tagore when he wrote on modern poetry; "In those days, the hall-mark of modernism in poetry was the individual's measure of delight. Wordsworth expressed in his own style the spirit of delight that he realised in Nature. Shelley's was a Platonic contemplation accompanied by a spirit of revolt against every kind of obstacle—political, religious or otherwise. Keats' poetry was wrought of the meditation and creation of beauty. In that age, the stream of poetry took a turn from outwardness to inwardness". The inner sentimental tumult got organised and expressed in beautiful forms, as a response to challenging environment, both physical and psychical. Thus through expression as the

cardinal principle in Tagore's aesthetics, we arrive at a principle of self-expression and self-realisation.

According to Tagore, the artist realised himself in and through his art-work. If we accept an identity of the individual self and the Absolute self then this "self-realisation" of Tagore and the Hegelian idea of the "Absolute realising itself in and through the sensuous image" come very close to one another. This "self-expression" was the expression of the spirit in man and as such artistic activity was spiritual in character. Tagore's ideas may look Hegelian in some respects but in reality they were inspired by the Upaniṣads. Tagore in fact had deep roots in the Upaniṣads and often quoted Upaniṣads.

He quotes *ānandarūpam amṛtam yad vibhāti* (that which reveals itself as immortal joy), and tells us: "In our country there is a concept of the highest Self. He is called Saccidananda (as the accomplished reality which as such is the identity of consciousness and bliss). . .". This joy is the last word and there is none after it. This joy or *ānanda* was the key-idea, the central category of Tagore's philosophy of life and existence. This *ānanda* works behind the cosmic creation, as also behind all aesthetic creation. Tagore frequently pointed out the likeness of the two—the joy of the creator being common to both. This joy is abundant and in its excess it burst forth in creative activities. It is always in surplus and in this region of the surplus, art takes its birth. When in this joy resides the principle of expression there is no meaning in the question whether "it does any good to us or not".⁴⁰ Thus expression and joy, they become somehow identical. Again he says: "The joy consists in the revelation of myself to me; mist damps our spirit". Now this *ānanda* (joy) is the character of our true self and is identified with the universal Self. This universal Self is *ānanda swarūp*, according to the Upaniṣads, and Tagore accepts this position. He writes in *Sādhana*:⁴¹ "And joy is everywhere; it is in the earth's green covering of grass; in the blue serenity of the sky; in the reckless exuberance of spring; in the severe abstinence of grey winter; in the living flesh that animates our bodily frame; in the perfect poise of human figure, noble and upright; in living; in the exercise of all our powers;

in the acquisition of knowledge; in fighting evils; in dying for gains we never can share". In the enjoyment of this *ānanda* our egoistic self is transcended; and this becomes possible in the domain of art. This *ānanda* is quite different from ordinary pleasure (as opposed to pain) as the former pertains to the real character of our true self. The transcendence of the egoistic self in the contemplation of art profoundly alters the nature of the pleasure derived from it. Tagore never speaks of *Sukha*, i.e. pleasure pertaining to the lower self in man in an aesthetic context. In pleasure we get isolated from others, but in the enjoyment of *ānanda* we get related to the "rest". Being altogether divorced from reference to personal interest (one's limitations of common pleasure) art experience is free from all that being disinterested, the pleasure which it yields will be absolutely pure. That is the significance of its description by ancient Indian writers.⁴²

Expression and Joy

In view of this higher character, it would be better to substitute for it a world like joy or delight, for art will yield such pleasure, it should be observed, not only when its subject matter is pleasant, but even when it is not, as in a tragedy. The facts poetised may, as parts of the actual world, be a source of pain as well as of pleasure; but when they are contemplated in their idealised form, as is done in every true art, they necessarily give rise only to joy or delight⁴² and in this joy or delight resides the principle of self-expression and self-realisation. So in a way through expression as aesthetic activity one realises oneself. Artistic reality may thus be looked as self-realisation.

In *Sāhityér Pathé* while discussing the nature of reality in art, Tagore elaborates this concept of self-realisation referred to earlier. He brings in the idea of *lilā* and characterises art as *lilā* wherein one realises oneself being completely unfettered by the restrictions of the worldly facts and events. In this world of make believe (i.e. the world of art) the artist is intensely conscious of his own existence (*asmitābodh*) and this

consciousness born of some intense feeling makes art beautiful and endows it with a flavour, unknown to other forms of human activity. Whatever might be the object of art (grotesque, beautiful or sublime) it must make one conscious of one's self through a taste of joy and this leads to self-realisation. That is how a gruesome murder, a heart-rending tragedy could be enjoyed in a work of art. Tagore tells us that when "I see it, I do not identify myself with the murderer or with the murdered. I see it and the dull monotony of our routine life, our everyday existence is given a rude jolt and an intense shake up. I awake to the reality of my own existence being confronted by the ugly and tragic incident as presented in the work of art. My reaction to the artistic situation is intense and it opens up the floodgates of my emotions instantaneously. The emotions and the object-consciousness that evoke these emotions make me conscious of myself and thus lead to my self-realisation". Sorrows which are absolutely personal are depersonalised while enjoyed in a work of art. An individual is not capable of experiencing all sorts of harmful experiences, nor does he want to have all types of sorrowful experiences in this day to day life. But he has some inner longing to expand himself beyond his daily routine of existence. Thus he seeks taste of varied and colourful experience; he wants to be in the midst of a sea of troubles, likes to live with the devil in imagination. Because they give his personality a bigger dimension; he feels there that the frontiers of his 'smaller me' have been expanded. This expansion becomes possible in a world of play or make-believe. That is how *Rāma-Līlā* came to be enjoyed by millions. The tragedies enacted there, if witnessed on the world scene, would have broken many hearts and left the rest bleeding and impaired. So reality in art, according to Tagore, is determined by the intense feeling-reaction of the appreciation, which feeling-reaction is an index of one's own process of self-realisation. If art gives pleasure, it is the pleasure of one's being conscious of oneself. Otherwise, nobody would certainly find any pleasure in the murder of Desdemona or Rohini. To witness this murder scene is pleasurable because I become intensely conscious of myself through my feeling-pattern evoked by this ghastly murder. But this pre-

supposes the appreciator being *sahridaya*; the idea of *sahridaya* recurs in Tagore again and again and he is indebted to ancient Indian aesthetics for the incorporation of this idea into his own system. Ānandavardhana's *Rasaṅgatā ēva Sahrdwatvam* (3|116) may be quoted in this context and Abhinavagupta's commentary entitled *Dhvanyālokalocana* (II. II. 1) may be referred to, to have a correct appraisal of the idea of *sahridaya* as used by Tagore again and again.

The aesthetic fact, when completely expressed in appropriate form is capable of producing this reaction in the *sahridaya*. Thus the right-type of expression in art is a source of our self-realisation, the higher and the nobler me in us. Thus in good art, in great art, in art worth the name, we have expression and in true expression we taste the joy that fills our true being, thus we come to know this being—our purer and higher self. Through this knowing, we realise our true self. So aesthetic expression means self-realisation for the artist and his self-realisation is achieved by the *sahridaya* through a taste of *rasa*. Following the ancient aesthetic tradition in India Tagore characterises this artistic creation as creation of *bhāva* and it appears as *rasa* to the appreciator or *sahridaya*. Since our finite self is not the individual fragmentary self but the universal Spirit, expression implies communion of the individual self with the rest of the universe. Science is concerned with our finite self, looked upon as finite and art is concerned with the finite self considered as the universal spirit. We may quote Tagore in point: "My contention is that science may discover new bases of knowledge while investigating the truths of the phenomenal world; but the world of aesthetic delight, *ānandam* remains rooted to its fundamental basis although it may extend its frontiers from age to age".⁴³

Moreover the acceptance of the Upaniṣhadic conception of *ānanda* and its identification with expression makes the problem all the more engaging. Tagore identifies expression with joy, and then tells us that "this joy consists in the revelation of myself to me". That is to say, expression in an object of art expresses the self of the artist, which, in its turn, is identical with universal Self. So in art the universal Self is expressed;

and It is known through this expression. It also realises Itself as objectified content. The "content" of Tagore must be taken as the "absolute content" of Hegel because through this objectification the individual self knows itself, and also because, on Tagore's own admission, this individual self is no other than the absolute Self. Thus we find that Tagore virtually identifies the Upanishadic "joy" with "expression" and again he identifies this joy with the knowledge of the Self. This joy is the true character of the individual self, which is identical with the universal Self. This act of self-realisation is also an act of self-freeing.

Tagore while explaining the spiritual significance of art comes very near Hegel when we hear him sing in *Gitanjali*: "My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to their eternal harmony?" Tagore in his own way tells us how the "Infinite realises itself in and through the finite". That art is the expression of inner emotion, and as such the spirit's self-objectification in individual image is undeniably true. We do agree that art is only expression, and realisation through such expression of the Absolute in sensuous form. If all activities are spiritual in character (and if it is specially so in the world of art) and the Absolute comprises all human activities as well, we may agree with Tagore (and with Hegel as well) that the Absolute was bodied forth in sensuous form on the aesthetic plane. This also explains Tagore's conception of the Absolute Beauty, which is objective in character. Tagore speaks of *sundara* or *parama sundara* again and again and they resemble the Hegelian idea of Absolute Beauty, as adumbrating in beautiful objects in art and nature. This principle of expression as a principle of meta-psychological explanation tells us that art was successful expression, essentially spiritual in character. This position of Tagore influenced a neo-vedantist,⁴⁴ a contemporary of Rabindranath and we hear him describe art as follows: "Art may be described as the self-intuiting of the soul in an individual image, the concrete image-expression of the inner sentimental tumult". We note that the Absolute of Hegel or the universal descending on the individual as conceived by

Tagore, may be the conditions precedent for artistic expression. They may be expressed in art this way quite as much as the relative and the finite (for they are the Absolute on ultimate analysis), what is necessary for expression being an emotion or stirring of the soul within. In his article entitled "Kalāvidyā", Tagore tells us that man expresses his "universal desires and longings" in and through his drawings and paintings and through music. His stirrings of the soul within come out in magnificent forms and these forms go down in history as specimens of good art. Man's intellectual build-up is more or less similar in character through different ages and climes. The laws of thought, the principles of ratiocination are virtually the same with people inhabiting different parts of the globe; their longings and desires also could be "universal longings and desires". As such they are all sharable and communicable. But due to their peculiar total individuality, their emotional reactions are widely at variance. Thus their unique personalities are expressed not so much through their logical dissertations as through their emotional reactions. The art-works are so varied and so very novel and enchanting because they perpetuate our emotions. The individuality of a person fully comes out in his emotion patterns and art bodies forth an individual's unique individuality by embodying his emotions. This release of emotions in the aesthetic activity gives us a sense of relief; the idea of this relief is found in Aristotle's concept of Catharsis. It gives the artist a sense of being free, being released from a tension and Tagore has very vividly explained this emotional tension of the artist in his celebrated poem "Bhāṣā O Chanda" wherein the tension in the mind of the Epic poet Vālmiki has been vividly delineated. The artist's tension is released in a word of make-believe, i.e. in the world of art. Therein he regains his freedom, and bondage of the objective conditions melt into the freedom of the aesthetic world. A sense of reality, a sense of truth as syntactic as we find in the aesthetic world gives a sense of freedom rare in our mundane living. We are intensely conscious of this "aesthetic reality" and Tagore went so far as to say that artist's creation created a type of reality, that alone could claim to be real, because in a way the artist's freedom was the maximum (therein

of Dr. Brajendranath Seal's abhorrence for closed systems as unreal and false).

The Impress of Spirit

Tagore tells us that the readers of *Vālmiki* have constructed a (mythical) biography of the poet on the basis of his poetry; this biography is truer than the actual life-history of the poet. Such mythical biographies are of higher spiritual value for they bear the impress of the spirit, the spirit in the poet having been expressed through this mythical biography. They cohere and help build-up a total vision wherein the poet and his poetry absolutely fit in (Tagore's criterion of coherence, harmony or 'sumiti' as he calls it, is met by this total vision). Poetic works or works of art are the result of the "primary activity" of the spirit. So we find Tagore telling us that he does not value so much the factual happenings in our day life as the handiworks of the spirit in man. Tagore's fundamental position lies in the fact that for him the poetic truth was of a higher order than truth in the sense of factual correspondence. Of course, events as they occur in nature, the "accidental events" do not enjoy the same status as the aesthetic facts. Aesthetic facts were of a superior value, for human imagination made them real for the fact and for the readers as well. But, as we have already pointed out earlier, the concept of "humanised nature" does not reveal nature as such but reveals man's nature as recreated being felt, perceived or apprehended by man. So when we look at nature in a way, we look at our own creation. And this process of recreation which starts with our seeing reaches its final transformation in the art-work. So reality-consciousness in art does not mean any type of correspondence between the facts-in-themselves and the artifacts. The facts-in-themselves can never be known from the Tagore's view-point. (It is psychologically maintainable as well.) If they are so unknown and unknowable, Tagore could never be considered a crude realist as his reality meant a subjective reality and art was a response to the challenge thrown out by this subjective reality. The Absolute for him was his own Absolute, his *Jivan-*

devatā, his all pervasive reality and art for him was the response of the artist to his own "subjective spiritual ideal which he de-subjectifies and treats as an objective entity, pervading the entire panorama of thought and being". This all pervasive harmony was spiritual in character for without some unifying spiritual principle this type of harmony cannot be thought of. Following the Upaniṣads, Tagore calls it *chandas*. So Tagore thought of *chandas*, i.e. the rhythm, cadence, proportion, harmony, balance, etc., to be the nature and reality of both the mundane world (the experimental world) on the hand and the aesthetic world on the other. This *chanda* is both a discovery and an invention at the same time. When we consider the world, both experimental and aesthetic as objective we discover the *chanda* therein and when in a more critical vein, we consider the world as subjective, we take *chandas* to be a matter of invention. It is the standpoint that determines the character of things either as subjective or objective and consequently the nature of *chandas* either as discovery or invention is determined thereby.

"An artist", Tagore tells us, "may paint a picture of a decrepit person, not pleasant to look at, and yet we call it perfect when we become intensely conscious of its reality". Plato thought that art fails in its mission to give us a glimpse of the Real, and he indicted art as doubly removed from Reality. But Tagore differs from Plato in this respect and to him art represents the inexhaustible magnificence of the creative spirit. It is inherently rational and it also transcends rationality. This all consuming compass of art owes itself to its syntactic character, which is essentially spiritual. All human activities being spiritual in character, art becomes both intellectual and moral; sometimes it is didactic, but this didacticism is not a necessity principle. True art has no practical purpose either of "hewing wood" or of "drawing water". Art is a window through which we gaze upon reality and come face to face with the Infinite. This Infinite, this Absolute is the content of art. When the Absolute is regarded as the content of art, it is the "formed Absolute" in art and not the Absolute of metaphysics. It is sensuous and its form is imbedded in the context itself. The two cannot be distinctly apprehended and we have raised this

point and discussed it earlier semantically. We have noted all the difficulties involved in the problem and tried to uphold Tagore's position vis-a-vis this form-content distinction. We have already noted that in Tagore's scheme of art, both content and form are considered to be equally important. Tagore can ignore neither matter nor form. He sometimes speaks of form as of primary importance, but his emphasis on matter is also reassuring. That is where he differs from Croce. Tagore takes form to be innate and not imposed from without. Speaking empirically, there is an organic unity between matter and form pervading the work of art as a whole and all artistic value of lies in this unity. For, as Tagore says, the "true principle of art is the principle of unity and the taste-value lies there". Matter and form, taken by themselves, are mere abstraction. In enunciating this empirically evidenced unity principle Tagore had many parallels, beginning right from Aristotle down to Colridge. Aristotle and Hegel also stressed this "unity in a work of art" and they considered it to be the *sine qua non* of true artistic excellence. The work of art must have a beginning, a middle and an end, in a word, it must be well-knit unity where no discord grates on our imagination. Carlyle held a similar view. His brief definition was that forms which grew round a substance, would be true, good; whereas forms which are consciously put around a substance are bad. Coleridge, in his "Lectures", in a similar vein offered a similar defence of a position akin to Tagore's. The organic form, he said, was innate; it shapped as it developed itself from within and the fulness of its development was one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. So Tagore told us that the two were as if one and through this unified image, the artist frees himself and realises himself. So art was a process of self freeing and self-realisation.

Tagore's preference for individual freedom as reflected in his art and his philosophy of art is evident in his music as well. The shackles of the Indian classical music were broken by him in his characteristic style of music. We may quote an authority⁴⁶ on Tagorite music in point: "I have often thought that in this caste-ridden country, even our music is divided and sub-divided into castes as innumerable perhaps as those among

human beings and as rigid. Or at least they were as rigid until lately; and Rabindranath is one of those who have been largely instrumental in freeing Indian music from the shackles, while adhering to its notional and characteristic beauty of form . . . with his individual, inventive and international turn of mind. Rabindranath has on the one hand, broken down the basis of caste in music and on the other tried to make of each song an individual entity, not merely a representative of a class or caste". This unique individuality of a work of art, be it a poem, a song or a painting is due to the individuality of the artist as conditioned by a particular psycho-physical set up. Art being the de-subjectification of subjective feelings under a peculiar set of conditions which are also unique in a way (because we humanise those conditions) is peculiar to the artist. In a word, art as expression claims the type of "unique individuality", being the creation of a unique individual. Such an individual responding to his own "imagined world" expresses himself in the most profound way and this profound self-expression was art. The total vision came out as a whole and it was externalised in and through the medium considered suitable by the artist. Its configuration was without any parallel, when considered as a whole. An art work may be analysed into materials categorised into different categories but that is the result of a post-mortem examination. The artist's creation is a totality and this totality involved and was invested with the unique individuality of the art work. Tagore speaks of a "tiger in story" who wanted a piece of soap to rub off his black-stripes and that too from the servant of the poet; and this tiger enjoyed unique individuality quite distinct from the rest of his species, as it was the creation of the artist's imagination. It was created as one whole and as not synthesis of different parts, nor belonging to a species which had generic qualities in common. There is no synthesis as such in the art-work itself. This peculiar phenomenon, this unique individuality of Tagore's creations was noted by another eminent connoisseur of music while he was discussing the nature of Rabindra Sangeet: "But by and large the words fully accepted the essence of the Indian music, that is the melody which itself is lyricism. It is strange

that the Tagore Music was not for harmony, the music of parts. There could be no question of symphony. Every song was a complete whole; there was no synthesis, no sycretism as there were no parts in that whole. Of course a post-mortem analysis might reveal some connecting links 'between the classical and the non-classical in style and complete blending of music and poetry' in the individual songs of Tagore". Sri Mukherjee cites some of the songs of Tagore and calls them musically incomparable. "Hé-dé-go Nandarānī", "Grām Chāra of rāngā mātir path", "Tumi jé surér āgun", "Nā nā, nā, karonā bhābanā", etc., are really the last word in music and poetry. They come out as one whole in those songs and this individuality was the characteristic of all art as intuition-expression. A reference to his paintings and sketches reveal that he believed in expression as the essence of art qua art. His paintings and sketches reveal the depths of his mind, not so much revealed in his literary creations. They reflect a world which was lost in the subconscious of the poet's mind. The concept of unique individuality in art necessarily leads us to the problem of aesthetic universality and it is rather difficult to accommodate this idea of universality in the scheme of an aesthetics which makes art-work unique in its essence. Tagore takes recourse to an explanation which was coming close to the principle of explanation as involved in the concept of "social mind".

In *Sāhityér Sāmagrī* Tagore speaks of owning by the artist of some universal *bhāva* which belonged to the humanity as a whole. The artist owns it while creating and again depersonalises the *bhāva* in his art-work, thus making universal appreciation of art possible. We may suggest by way of interpretation that whatever was lost to the individual was stored up in the universal mind (or call it social mind) and this lost element was recovered in art-work. In Freudian terminology this universal mind of Tagore could be called the subconscious or the unconscious. Freud might suggest that the subconscious mind modelled the art-forms of conscious creation and Tagore's own explanation would be with reference *bhāva* in the social mind or mind of "man in its totality". Tagore's idea of art, as the reaction of the "total personality" of man also suggests the

borrowing of this *bhāva* from the universal mind and thus making art universal through a process of depersonalisation. Or we may refer to his sketches and paintings to demonstrate how the subconscious worked to make them universally acceptable. As a painter he realised the ultimate aesthetic function of all objects: though as a poet he had his narrower, rather victorian ideals of beauty.⁴⁹ The facts remain that in his literary work, in spite of repeated efforts, Tagore was circumscribed by his theory and practice of Beauty as something delicate, well-mannered, spiritual, somewhat aristocratic and a little Tennysonian.

Tagore's Paintings Discussed

In his pictures, however, he had discovered that "camels are very weird, but in its own surroundings in the desert, the camel is complete".⁵⁰ In the same context Tagore told us in London in 1930: "It came to my mind that the whole world can be viewed as a unity of life and creation. Only those creations of the poet or the artist have a right to survive which have their proper balance, for inter-relation is a principle of creation". It was easier to see and create the surroundings of a thing in a picture and set the thing right than in a poem and one is struck and overwhelmed by the revelation of a great poet's world of vision when he happens to see some of the Tagore's pictures, running into some two thousand and odd ones. These pictures by Rabindranath seemed to be a revolt against the thin blooded artiness and pictorial weakness of the neo-Indian art. Tagore drove past the dead academic realism which sought to reproduce nature and the "debilitated prettiness of the orientalist" as well. Tagore's world of vision, so powerfully transmuted in the world of his paintings, was a strange and unafraid world giving a sense of magnificent richness of a powerful personality. It had great variety, delicate things, almost girlish things, strong things, of horror and of nightmare, exquisitely fanciful things. There are many moods of joy in movement and in stillness, of nostalgia, of sardonic humour of harsh satire, and of tenderness. And almost always the hand is

infallibly certain. The beauty of the moving lines is astonishingly bold and sure, in spite of the experimental nature of the inspiration; and in a very large number of pictures, the use of colour is highly rich and original. His rich sense of rhythm and form as was earlier illustrated in his writings and music gave new dimensions to his picture world. The Indian character of his paintings can be seen in the same artistic vision that we find in the most glorious of our arts in a sunny country, namely sculpture, which embraced every aspect of life, human, animal and vegetable, and turned them all into art-forms; all of them revealed a certain civilised, fanciful, but controlled attitude to life. Some well-known indologist attributes this excellence of Tagore's pictures to his sense of *chandas*,⁵¹ which was his legacy and heritage from a rich past. This explanation principle as found in *chandas* may be rediscovered in his idea of *sumiti* or internal coherence. Some of these pictures are exhibiting rounded patterns on the accidents of calligraphy based mostly on erasures; some are very close to real life and some are portraits of men and women, of himself and of historical figures, such as Dante. In the later works, along with the interest in natural forms, flowers, birds and animals, men and women, still or in movement, we find dream pictures; and in some, we find a trend towards the pure design of forms, sometimes even grotesquerie; some are bold sweep of colour, some others are gem-like or mosaic-like in their scales of tone. There are many in the gayest colours but quite a few have an enfolding darkness. In Tagore's pictures, one hardly fails to notice the unitary view of objects as is the characteristic of the expressionistic style. And it will not be too much to say that painting and poetry in Tagore are complementary as the play of the unconscious mind in Tagore finds⁵² its full play in his paintings. In his literary creations we generally get only glimpses of this unconscious in a sublimated form. The lines in the pictures are bold and the colours are mostly loud and telling. They catch the eye at once and the sensibility of the critic is immediately pitched high. May be Leonardo was right in considering painting a more satisfactory art than poetry, judged purely from a psychological point of view and not on grounds as

adduced by him. His contention that "the eye which is called the window of the soul is the chief means whereby the understanding can most fully and abundantly appreciate the infinite works of nature and the ear is second which acquires dignity by hearing of the things the eye has seen" may not be acceptable to some people and may be acceptable to some others.⁵³ Specially in the case of Tagore, both painting and poetry have their rich suggestibility. But for the bodying forth of the unconscious the pictures of Tagore do not show much of difference in expressiveness as is found in his poetry. The appeal of music has an emotive meaning, which is easily excitable. But the appeal of poetry and painting and the responses thereto are conditioned by the discipline of the intellect and sensibilities of the appreciator (Refer to the idea of *sahrdaya*).

So we can hold in the light of the above discussion that Tagore is a realist (in his own sense) and an expressionist as well. We may note at length the contention of a noted Indologist,⁵⁴ that Tagore as a painter was an expressionist at the first instance. "Tagore's paintings and drawings are not representational. They are at times impressionistic, but chiefly expressionistic. Whatever they be from the standpoint of these categories of contemporary aesthetic science, their value as ornamental or decorative designs is obvious". It has been suggested that the decorative value of art as manifest in the impressionist and expressionist schools might have been imbibed by him from the contemporary western art, specially from Cezanne's "significant forms" and "plastic vitalities". But in painting as in poetry Tagore's accentuations and assimilations are so creative and distinctive that it is difficult to point to the exact western parallels of significant forms. Tagore's imageries in paintings are vividly real for him and for the appreciator as well. They enjoy the truth of form for excellence. Tagore's notion of artistic truth or aesthetic reality is so profoundly impressed upon his creations that all these painted characters give a profound sense of reality in their own ways. Even fantasy pictures carry with them a self-certitude which convinced the viewer of their reality. We think that taking this aspect into consideration, Professor Sarkar, while characterising

Tagore's paintings as expressionistic described him as the "most hard-headed realist" in painting. To quote him:⁵⁵

There is no muddle in Rabi's structures, no timidity and half-heartedness in his tones, no delight in the absence of contours. Everything here is movement from light to light. The entire atmosphere is of strength and the joy of strength. Rabi the painter is nothing but power, vividness, brilliancy, command over material things, definite constructions, vigorous delineations.

The bold realism in a way stands in contrast to the mystic tenets of Tagore's poetry and that is why Professor Sarkar observed elsewhere that "Rabi the painter is going beyond Rabi the poet and the painter is not a mere translator or paraphraser of the poet. The painter has commenced where perhaps the poet let off".⁵⁶ We do not subscribe to this beginning and end theory but simply hold that Tagore's poetry and painting are complementary, both partaking in some generic qualities attributable to the genius of Tagore.

We may now note with interest the paintings of Tagore as published in *Chitralipi*⁵⁷ and may attempt an analysis of these pictures, their formal rhythms and structural designs.

Plate No. 1 is a fine specimen of solid colouring in diverse hues in which the background is no less significant than the figure. The form that has been created is, however, more in evidence. The execution is sculpturesque in quality. It is essentially a study in composition. The female figure has been brought out in bold relief. The work has entailed a powerful handling of shapes although of delicate structure and a thoroughly sure mastery of colour. The characteristic formation of the upper half of the body, placed as it is on the somewhat uniform lower half, arrests the eye at once. Not less conspicuous are the varieties in little blends and small manes from the tip of the head to the arm shape. The artist calls it "the picture of the tender engraved on the stony hard" (*Kathinér buké tănā karunér chabi*). Artistically the composition is plastic and

marble-like offers solace to the eye without the support of a story or imaginary incident.

Plate No. 2 exhibits the artist's power as a bold colourist. The face in its peculiarity may be frightening. Formation is seen suspended in a background of dark atmosphere variegated with red border. A somewhat mystical discipline has been offered by the artist as follows: "The phantoms of faces come unbidden into my vacant hours". This might lead the viewer to some esoteric meaning not intended by the artist. It provides ample scope for the viewer for "Joy in the Play of Colours".

Plate No. 3 presents a beautiful landscape, though not a natural one. The structure of the piece gives us joy and this profound enjoyment is occasioned by the diversities of mild yet bold colour-technique. The flow of liquid hues in wave-formations is an exquisite feature of this work. The shapes look spontaneous, born of the playful movement of colour. The brilliant glow around the trees and in the atmosphere in an oblique form furnishes the entire milieu with the hearty laughter of nature in her happy moods. This creation is independent of "emotions recollected in tranquillity" or of what the eye can generally see in nature. Plate No. 16 comes close to plate No. 3 in its style, treatment and subject-matter. It is a fresh instance of solid sculpturesque colouring. The impression is one of marble-like qualities as well as soft, soothing, cool texture in brown and grey.

Plate No. 4 presents the sketch of a conventionalised female form arising out of watery masses. The background of the water forms below may be taken somewhat as executions in the Japanese style, e.g., of Hokusai's Wave studies. The elongated human figure emerging from a broad basis has been placed in the right third of the sheet. The unoccupied two-thirds of the space to the left may suggest to some eyes the conception of the infinite.

Plate No. 5 may be looked upon as a mass of temple and other building formations facing a number of light-coloured hill forms in parallels. Plate No. 4 and 5 present studies in the vein of the American modernist Max Weber. It may be suggested on passant that the romantic flashes and mystical

delicacies (as found) in Delacroix and Corot may be found in Plates 3, 5 and 15.

In Plates 6, 9, 12 and 14 animal forms are exhibited; they are bold and precise shapes, with hazy contours and vague delineations, although each is quite unzoological and definitely conventionalised. But they are not abstractions. Tagore is not a Kandinsky or a Klee in futurism and his improvisations are not mere allegories. The animals can all be made out without labels although perhaps as grotesques. And assuredly they are all expressionist; they may be taken as specimens of decorative art.

Plate No. 14 has the following title in verse given by the poet: "I have searched out the cave of the primitive in my mind with its etchings of animals". Plate No. 17 is akin to Plate No. 14 and affiliated to grotesque animal form series. They are forms which haunted the poet's mind in his childhood and early boyhood. They were pushed back to the unconscious of his mind and were never allowed to come up to take their places in Tagore's more articulated creative work, viz., poetry and other forms of creative writing. Painting provided the unconscious with a window to peep through. And the unseen and never-to-be-seen broke through in light and colour on the canvas and got expressed. Plate No. 10 presents a group of conventionalised man and woman, both in white with just two lines to indicate or suggest that we are encountering two figures. The faces are unrecognisable except in their position as head-pieces. The work is an original imaginative creation and a fine specimen of expressionism. In the preface to the *Chitralipi* Tagore speaks of expression as the end of artistic activity. He writes:

People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures. I remain silent even as my pictures are. It is for them to express and not to explain. They have nothing ulterior behind their own appearance.

Thus these pictures in *Chitralipi* offer a "theory of art as the thing in itself", i.e., art qua art was uppermost in the

artist's mind while drawing these art-works. The non-subservience of art and the artist to any cause extraneous to art as such is the starting point of Tagore's aesthetics and this "plastic autonomy of modern art" has been unambiguously stressed by a serious student⁵⁸ of Tagore's aesthetics while writing the introduction to the *Centenary Folio* of Tagore's paintings published by the Lalit Kala Akademi. The forms as delineated by Tagore are self-referent and as such no outside dictation is there to guide Tagore's art-activity. To quote Neogy:

The drawings and paintings of the poet had richly traced the extra-ordinary inner journey of a complex individual through the ecstatic affirmation of existence, manifest as rhythm-articulate inherent in form, self-referent, towards, to the convinced cognition of individuated imagery as dramatic characterization of concepts and associations, being the total fantasy of the emotional world.

It may be said of Tagore's paintings that he progressively transmuted through unrelenting creativity, all that had pre-existed as limited and local, into expressions increasingly contemporary and universal. His work as a painter in the new unfamiliar medium laid bare strange non-challant linear rhythms and assertive, disquieting, fantastic images. This phenomenon contra-distinguished from all the profound and serene values the poet had carefully tended and developed through continuous creative activity, reflected his conscious mind. His paintings and sketches gave us a glimpse of the infra-conscious regions of his mind. In paintings and sketches we could easily find how Tagore's "innate susception of rhythm, his highly developed feeling for measure, his impeccable sense of visual syntax and his disciplined, elegant calligraphy" gave expression to the profounder experiences and synoptic visions which his conscious mind was loath to bring forth before the gaze of the world. From literary creations to paintings, there was a slow transition from a quasi-traditional, ethical aestheticism, through increasingly subjective interpretations of tradition to an open assertion of vivid personal experience of reality as the apprehensible

universe of the individual. In paintings the intuition of the painter was not fettered by any extra-aesthetic consideration which was repugnant to the identity of intuition and expression. In Tagore's paintings, his intuitions came raw on the canvas, i.e., as things were in the painter's mind. Conventional ethics, aesthetics and axiology did not find a place in Tagore's paintings. The intuited forms, unconventional, grotesque or sublime, came up before the viewer in the full glory of expression. They were desubjectified subjectivity, completely unrelated to and divorced from the technique of externalisation and as such were no part of aesthetic activity; its methodology baffled all conventional analysis and categorisation. Tagore showed and illustrated beyond doubt that no "ism" in painting was necessary; his further contention was that the technique was there no doubt but it was not a "necessity principle" in the domain of art. We may admit that technique as such might delimit the content of art as certain types of content might be considered by some as not communicable through a particular type of technique as practised by a particular school of painting. But this delimitation of content while narrowing the scope of artistic expression would again take away much of artist's freedom. As pointed out earlier, Tagore took the phrase "human personality" both in its inclusive and exclusive senses. When taken in the exclusive sense, it raises both the problems of communicability and of the artist's freedom.

We may note that some critics accepted the exclusive meaning of the "human personality". Let us examine this position in detail.

Delimited Content and the Problem of Communication

One of the critics referred to above,⁵⁹ takes up this "exclusive meaning" as suggested by Tagore and compares his position with that of Croce with regard to art and art criticism; he concludes: "Again, by making expression mean expression of the individual experience and not of some super-personal reality, which is common to all, Croce has made the problem of communication in art difficult and he has raised but left

unsolved the more general problem of the one and the many". We do not agree with the critic on this issue.

We do not accept his explanation of Tagore's delimitation and narrowing of the content of art to the experiences of some super-personal reality as final because this does not fit in with the general scheme of Tagore's aesthetics as found in his various writings and as discovered in his art-creations. We fail to understand how the problem of communication in art becomes easier when we restrict its content to the experience of something super-personal. Such experiences are certainly not very frequent with the common run of man. What is common is sharable and as such communicable. This communicability is largely dependent on similarity in experience. Experience *E* belonging to *A* will be communicable to *B* only when *B* had a similar experience *E*. So this common participation has for its presupposition a reference to similar experiences although their space-time referents may be different. The basic psychological postulation is this that no two people could have identical experience. The concept of empathy also presupposes some common platform or similar avenue of experience where both the poet and the critic could co-exist. If one's level is extraordinary the other may not attain such a level. In that case communicability would be at a disadvantage. So when Tagore speaks of the super-personal as a possible content of art, his super-personal is necessarily supernormal and can only be hinted at; it can never be fully expressed in human language, which is our ordinary means of communication. In this sense, all mystical content is unspeakable. Moreover, art would cease to be art proper if it represented the universal as distinguished from the individual and the concrete, and would, in that case, be only another name for abstract philosophical speculation. Here we will do well to remember the note of caution by Nicolai Hartmann. He pointed out that art does not speak in concepts;⁶⁰ it does not call things by name. It beholds, and forms what it beholds. He who would hear its language, he who would appreciate its content, must not only understand it, but be also able to translate it into the language of concepts. But that is something different from contemplative enjoyment. And this

contemplative enjoyment according to Hartmann, is the soul of all true art. Here we are not concerned with abstract concepts which claim universal acceptance. The aesthetic configuration speaks of an individual, of a particular, or of some individuals, and it might suggest a general truth. For, we know that to create is to particularise, to embody in an individual. The universal, either as self or as reality, can be an object of abstract contemplation and thought, and not of creative activity. It is a truism to say that if we take art to express the common experiences of an individual, and not some super-personal reality as Tagore has sometimes conceived, we make the problem of communication easier. It is no doubt true that if we aim to express some super-personal reality through the medium of art its appeal will not reach all sections of people. Only the *sahrdaya* capable of reaching that height would be in a position to share the poet's ecstasy. If art expresses experiences which are commonplace, it could easily be communicated to others and appreciated by them. But the expression of super-personal reality will make art unintelligible to many, for they may never have had such experiences. Tagore means to say that art must express what is universal and permanent in human nature. "Man must find and feel and represent in all creative works man the eternal, the creator. Their civilisation is continual discovery of the transcendental humanity".⁶¹ But we must note that the super-personal reality or the transcendental humanity must necessarily include the personal and the immanent as without the latter, art would become absolutely colourless and unvariegated. We may suggest that human nature itself is permanent and universal, of course in an abstract sense. Man may live while individual human beings are destined to perish with their so-called permanent and temporary traits. So we may contend that nothing is permanent and nothing is temporary in us. The abstract concept may be permanent in a sense. But in the aesthetic context it is the magic wand of the artist that makes a particular character lasting and immortal, the temporal is transformed into the eternal. Shakespeare's Falstaff certainly does not represent any transcendental and eternal reality. He represents the common man in us, the man

as a tissue of inconsistencies and contradictions. Shylock, the Jew, stands as an immortal creation, and he certainly does not represent any nobler virtue in man than the common, inordinate greed for wealth and the common thirst for revenge. Iago, the villain in Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Brian de Bois Gilbert in Scott's *Ivanhoe* are certainly not characters that may be admitted by Tagore into his kingdom of art if he sticks to his idea of super-personal reality as the only content of art. They do not represent the super-personal reality in man, and yet their artistic value will never be questioned. Tagore talks of gluttony and tells us that the throne of literature will never go to it, for it has no higher value than mere instinct. Thirst for revenge, greed, love of falsehood, and inconsistency are no better than gluttony, yet they are immortalized through Shylock and Falstaff. We may multiply instances from both poetry and painting. We can quote from Tagore himself many an instance which will show that art can become what it really ought to be, even if it expresses the ordinary experiences of our day-to-day life. It does not require a super-personal reality so much as true expression to make art what it is. This characterisation and delimitation of the content of art by Tagore may not be taken as final, as it involves a patent contradiction and Tagore may be said to have been aware of it. That is why Tagore sometimes considers the whole character as the essential character and this in a sense obliterates the distinction between the 'ought' and the 'is', the ideal and the real, which we propose to note in course of this discussion.

His own observations on art and literature elsewhere suggest a view contrary to the assertion of super-personal reality as the exclusive content of poetry and literature. In this context, Tagore specifies man's essential nature as the content of aesthetic creation and by that term he means the particular character of the artist. So in a way he has been converging on the concept of whole man as expressing itself through art. As we have already pointed out, Tagore's apparently self-contradictory observations will melt and reconcile themselves if human personality is taken in an inclusive sense. This idea of whole man as expressing itself in art is also consistent with Tagore's idea

of freedom in art as any delimitation of the aesthetic content might take away much of the artist's freedom. In *Sāhityér Pathé*, Tagore tells us that in the revolutionary region of freedom, art and literature take their birth; therein the ideal alone is revealed as the true. That is why Tagore disallows pragmatism and didacticism to be of any consequence for art as they also take away much of the artist's freedom. In fact his enunciation of the principle of disinterested contemplation in art upholds this principle of aesthetic freedom which negates all restrictions on the artist, both formal and material. And in this vein, while discussing the issue,⁶² Tagore tells us that a man's essential nature is made up of his knowledge and imagination, and both of these are revealed in his poetry; so poetry is the expression of his personality. Tagore writes:

Our study and observation, our conversation and thinking, all put together make up for each one of us an essential character. According to the essential character we are either attached to the world or repelled by it, either nationalists or internationalists, worldly or spiritual, lovers of action or of thought. My particular character must be present in my writings either in a manifest or hidden form. Whatever I may write, lyrics or anything else, I reveal thereby not merely a momentary mood of my mind; the very truth of my inner being impresses its mark on them.

(The distinction of essential character and the empirical character of man is being repudiated here by Tagore, as has been suggested by us earlier. The essential character being reflected in empirical character does away with the initial dichotomy.) So this essential character of man characterises all his writings. His work bears the impress of his character which is another name for personality. Tagore tells us in no uncertain terms that "it is the duty of every human being to master at least to some extent, not only the language of intellect but also that of personality which is the language of art".⁶³ Now what is this personality?

To Tagore, personality means the mental life of a man. This mental life resides "where our intelligence and feelings,

desire and experience, all have melted and mixed into a perfect unity".⁶⁴ Now it becomes clear that this appraisal of Tagore does not signify any delimitation of the content of art to the higher nature of man. Tagore defines personality as man's real individuality. There is a kind of unity in man, Tagore contends, underlying his various thoughts and feelings and actions, which can be regarded as the root nature in him. This is neither apparent, nor clearly perceptible. This unity is mostly inferred from his conduct, and we may refer his various acts of omission and commission at various periods of his life to the self-same personality, art being expression of this personality of the artist. The intimate relation between art and the artist's whole character or personality in Tagore's scheme of aesthetics is now getting clearer. This relation is apparent. This relation again undeniably leads us to Tagore's idea of expression, and his faith in expression is once again reiterated while he refers Shakespeare and Dante to their respective creative activity. Tagore writes: "That each of Shakespeare's dramatic progenies has got a clear individuality does not mean that they have no element of Shakespeare's character in them".⁶⁵ Again he writes in *Sāhitya*: "With the poetry of Dante, the poet's life is indissolubly mixed up; if we read the two together, we can better appreciate and respect each". Thus a poet's life is complementary to his works: one must be read along with the other. The artist leaves a permanent impression on what he creates. The whole man creates the literature. Man reveals himself in various situations in little fragments. These fragmentary parts of him constitute his philosophic, scientific, and other activities. The observant part of man makes science. But where literature or painting or music is born, there the whole man is concerned. This idea of whole man suggests human personality in the inclusive sense as distinct from the exclusive sense. There is an apparent conflict in these two different senses as certain areas of the meaning as connoted by whole man when taken in the first sense are excluded from the meaning of the word when taken in the second sense. But we have already made it clear that Tagore uses the word in the second sense as an inclusive term, i.e. he includes in whole man

all possible activities and experiences of human mind and all the conceivable aspects and facets of human personality.⁶⁶ From the aesthetic view point, passing moods of the poet are equally valuable as the permanent dispositions of his character because there was a difference between aesthetic and metaphysical concepts. The marxist interpretation of aesthetic values as offered by Plekhanov, while admitting the necessity of utility principle within the scheme of aesthetics might give a different interpretation, but Tagore, being a spiritualist cannot exclude any aspect of human personality from the domain of art. His acceptance of *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* facilitates the acceptance of whole man in the inclusive sense and we read this meaning in Tagore, wherever it occurs in the particular context. Tagore actually in his hundreds of poems, immortalises our very common experiences and every day occurrences. He demonstrates beyond doubt that the poet puts his very self in his poem, and he who reads the poem touches the poet. "It is not that we can on every occasion bring it out by analysing poetry, nevertheless, we quite well feel its influence".⁶⁷

The foregoing quotation from Tagore does not agree with the meaning of human personality in the exclusive sense as referred to above. This definitely contradicts Tagore's idea of the poet's personality as constituted by his high self, i.e. what he aspires to be; again this notion of high self does not fully explain the variety of the artist's creations. So we take this expression of human personality in art as subsuming all that is lower (if any) in human nature. Of course, higher and lower in ethical sense does not quite fit in the scheme of aesthetics. Ethical considerations should not be the regulative principles in aesthetics. So if high self is the object of art, it should be taken to subsume within it all that is low, may be in a transformed and transmuted state. As for the passing moods, Tagore has given us glaring instances of immortalising moods which were antagonistic to one another being higher or lower in the ethical sense. This contextual meaning gives a type of emotive content to a mood which becomes anachronistic in a different context. As in life, so in art, they co-exist. Art is co-extensive with life and transcends life. Nothing is there in human experience

which falls outside the domain of art. *Sandhyā Sangīt* and *Prabhāt Sangīt* speak of two different worlds of emotion, hopes and aspirations. They look so different in their approach to and understanding of the human problems in their affective meaning. Yet they are inherently related to the self-same psyche of the poet, i.e., the mind of the poet. So the need for the postulation of life and art and their identity has been felt in some quarters, while studying Tagore's aesthetics.

Some critics like Dasgupta effect a virtual identification of life and art. In his view, Tagore's spiritual outlook on life has influenced both his philosophy of life and his philosophy of art.⁶⁸ Tagore's concept of *chandas*, as he was imbued with from his study and understanding of the Upaniṣads, permeates all that he did and made in the realm of life and art. Again this principle of *chandas* upholds the view that all conceivable phenomena pertaining to life, mental and physical are the plausible content of art.⁶⁹ Hope and despair, optimism and pessimism, all warring notions, all contradictory facts of life are impressed with *chandas* and as such they have equal claim to be considered as art content. But one may argue that all artistic creations of the artist do not bear the imprint of his essential nature or character, thereby implying the conventional dichotomy between the essential and the non-essential character in man. Sometimes the poet may speak of the rosy side of life, sometimes he may sing a sorrowful song. Both moods, it has been contended, do not constitute the poet's essential nature. But we think that both are touched by *chandas* when looked at from its proper perspective, i.e. from the viewpoint of the whole. There is an all-pervading gestalt in life and art. When a particular phenomenon is considered against this gestaltqualität, it acquires a meaning different from the one it is invested with, when considered conventionally. So we find that the inclusive sense we have suggested with regard to the essential nature of the poet as reflected in his art has been corroborated by this concept of *chandas* as a principle of explanation of Tagore's life and art. The *chandas* comprises the whole, the conscious and the sub-conscious, the good and the bad, the higher and the lower. So once again, viewed from the angle of a different

principle of explanation we may find the reconciliation of the inner contradiction. Sometimes in the same book of verse the poet delineates two fundamentally different characters, and yet both reach true artistic height. We recall Duryadhana and Gāndhārī, two characters in Tagore's *Gāndhārīr Ābédan* as instances in point. One represents fraud, guile, and dishonesty, the other honesty, simplicity, and truth, but as artistic creations, they claim equal credit. We have already made it clear that the individual moods, ideas, thoughts, and feelings cannot be taken to be permanent because the individual himself is subject to decay and death. They become somewhat permanent only when they are enshrined in suitable art-form. So when we think of something as permanent in an individual, it must be looked upon as expressed and made permanent. And being expressed it becomes communicable and as such universal and permanent. Thus aesthetically oriented they deserve universal acceptance in the aesthetic sense, i.e. they are acceptable to people who are *sahṛdaya*. Suspicion has been immortalised in Shakespeare's *Othello* not for its being a psychological fact of abiding interest but for being successfully expressed. Tagore thus refuses a compartmentalisation of psychological activities and differs from Croce in this regard. According to Croce,⁷⁰ a man is known by what he understands in logical concepts, by what he does and wills besides what he intuitively expresses. We do not agree with Croce when he says that the poet and the man cannot be equated without a remainder, and that the entire man never comes out in the poet as such. Let us remember that the human mind does not work in a unilinear process. It works in the multilinear directions and that is why varied and variegated creations could be attributed to the self-same artist. Let us refer to some concrete instances with special reference to Tagore's earlier works.

Referring to the period of his life when he was writing *Prabhāt Sangīt*, Tagore says : "I know not how all of a sudden my heart flung open its doors, and let the crowd of worlds rush in, greeting each other".⁷¹ Whereas in *Sandhyā Sangīt* the poet seems to have been reserved and reticent;⁷² in *Prabhāt Sangīt* it is as if he had come out of himself, or had by some

magic power lifted the veil between himself and the rest of the world. *Prabhāt Sangīt* carries a message of spirit that is robustly conscious of its place in the world, which the poet loves boundlessly and of which he gives his readers Wordsworthian glimpses. Thus the gloom and the indecision, the confusion and the feeling of isolation that we notice in *Sandhyā Sangīt* are replaced by a lively sense of oneness with the rest of humanity, nay with the rest of the universe. In *Prabhāt Sangīt* the poet has apparently changed beyond recognition. The "awakening of the waterfall has been complete". This change of attitude towards men and matter is a constant feature in any poet worth the name, and this change reminds us of the reality of both. Nothing real could come out of the unreal. If despair is real, hope is equally real and vice-versa. When they get flesh and blood in a work of art, they are completely desubjectified and given a personality of their own. The more perfect the artist, the more complete is this process of desubjectification of the subjective elements as conditioned by varying environmental conditions, both psychical and physical. This accounts for the multi-coloured image of the artist, one could conjure up from the varying tones and undertones of his creations. The contraries and the contradictories as found in the artist's conceptions form the totality of the personality of the artist in which stand reconciled all these conflicting phenomena.

Concept of Synthetic Personality

It is the studied opinion of Tagore that a poet's or an artist's biography can be constructed out of the materials strewn all through his creations. We cannot reach the true poet or the artist by studying his biography. The rendered events of the poet's life do not reveal the poet, for it is the biographer's poet that is presented through such biographies. The poet as such is never revealed through them. The biographer offers principles of explanation of his own choice which hardly do justice to the poet's multi-dimensional personality. But the poet is expressed in his poetry and his works give us a true picture of him. We know the complex personality of a Shakespeare

through his works. When we do not understand him, we generally fail to apprehend the principle of the unity of character in such master artists. For there is so much variety in them, because of their wide sympathy and rich humanity, that we lose sight of the thread of unity that holds together this variety. How does his rich human individuality in its difficult complexity (of the artist) express in literature and is communicated to the appreciating mind is any body's guess. It seems that while being expressed it becomes sharable, having acquired some 'virtues' which were not present while it remained cloistered in the artist's mind. But Tagore seems to suggest that before the process of creation actually takes place, the artist gets metamorphosed within and he is changed beyond recognition, because of the descent of the universal spirit on him; this descent is presupposed by a feeling of 'oneness' with the rest of mankind. It is a state of depersonalisation; it could be looked upon as a principle of departicularisation as well. The individual spirit of the artist, for the time being is subsumed under the universal spirit and creation becomes possible under this mystic state of fusion of the universal and the individual spirit. Tagore writes :

When the individual self of an author identifies itself with the great human self through sympathy, then upon his nature does the universal spirit put its stamp. The personality of a good dramatist and the human nature outside it combine so harmoniously that it is hard to separate them.⁷³

We may call it the synthetic personality of the artist, that expresses through the work of art. This "synthetic personality" of the artist, makes possible universal acceptance of his work. This principle of explanation has been differently characterised by different critics and it is said of Shakespeare that he knew through love and insight the hearts of men and women of all ranks, he revealed through his art. This deep sympathy for his fellowmen led Shakespeare to a proper understanding of the essential nature of man. Tagore would say that Shakespeare's personality absorbed within itself the different smaller personalities he depicted as vividly and truthfully in his plays and

this was possible for the descent of the universal man in Shakespeare before he set to his creative works. In terms of Leibniz's monadology, we may say that a great author is a more enlightened, developed, and active monad that intuits and reflects the less developed, comparatively confused, and passing monads. This explanation as offered by Leibnitz comes close to Tagore's idea of the individual self being subsumed under the universal self.

In contrast to Tagore's explanation given above, we may note the views of some of the western critics in point; they hold that art is the expression of the poet's feelings. The artist momentarily identifies himself with various feeling-gestalts and expresses them as if they were his own. The poet's sincerity is not deep-rooted, for it has no mooring in the poet's personality; it behaves just like a refractor. The true poet does not express his personality in his work; he only objectifies his own experiences (real or imaginary) and makes them available to the rest of the world. This expression of momentary feelings, which we call art, cannot, however, give us a true picture of the artist. It has been contended that this was the case with Shakespeare. The critics who tried to reconstruct the personality of Shakespeare from his creations soon came to discover that there are a number of characters (which could be attributed to Shakespeare simultaneously) and they are as conflicting and contradictory as Iago and Othello, Hamlet and his villain uncle. Empirically considered, the truth is apparent that a great poet identifies himself with all kinds of personalities at different times, and expresses with equal felicity all kinds of thoughts and feelings of these different characters. Thus it is difficult to determine from the writings of Shakespeare whether he was a pessimist or an optimist, an atheist or a theist, a fatalist or a believer in free will. For all these antithetical attitudes are expressed in his writings. The principle of explanation as found in the concept of 'negative capability' of the poet has come up for discussion again and again in this context and Keats has been referred to for coining this epithet for the capacity of depersonalisation on the part of the poet or the artist. We may quote Keats when he writes :

And at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievements especially in literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean negative capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.⁷⁴

He writes in another letter :

As to the poetic character itself, it is not itself, it has no self, it is everything and nothing. It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon poet.⁷⁵

Keat's "negative capability" is rather descriptive in character. It has a negative suggestion and we may hold him guilty of committing the fallacy of negative definition while Tagore's idea of the "descent" of universal spirit on the individual spirit of the artist, though explains the situation with equal felicity does not commit the type of fallacy that Keats had unwittingly committed. We may note that Tagore was in similar uncertainties as Keats with regard to the definition of poetry or art, when he defined art as *māyā*. But he overcame this state and gave us a positive principle of explanation and Tagore's idea of "humanised nature" as explained earlier, is an extension of his own principle of explanation as explained above. The rich emotional meaning that a picture suggests or a poem connotes is deemed to be present in the artistic work. These feelings (in the art work) take their colour from the poet's personality and when they are appreciated the reader or the critic lends his own "colours" to the work of art and recreates the subtle shades in the light of his own imagination and experience. It is a truism that different people look upon the same object from different points of view. These points of view are determined by their different likes and dislikes, beliefs and disbeliefs, inclinations and apathies—in short, their respective personal equations. But it is not true that the poet has no personality

(as held by Keats) that expresses itself in art. This is psychologically unsound. All that we can suggest is that a work of art has no definite and static personality as bound and determined by some definite boundaries. They shift and change with every individual reader investing the art-work with a different personality. As in the eye of legal jurisprudence the different institutions are invested with a sort of "legal personality" so in the present context we invest the art work with a personality which is far from being static and definite. But it does not suggest that the artist has no personality and it is not reflected in the art-work. The personality of the artist as reflected in the art-work, when sought to be apprehended by the reader or the critic, may be correctly understood if we invest the reader with the capacity for an objectively correct appraisal of the meaning content of the art-work. We know that this objective appraisal is a fiction of imagination as it has been said to be a psychological absurdity. But this does not warrant a denial of personality to the artist. For, we know and this is psychologically borne out that this personality, this thought-feeling pattern, on every occasion determines our outlook on life and helps us to create various works of art. The Taj Mahal, the epitome of the emperor's love for his wife, has been the focal point of many a literary work. But the same thing has been variously delineated by different poets and artists because of their varying thought-feeling patterns, that is, their personalities prompted them to see the same thing differently and to reconstruct it in their own imagination. Thus the truth of imagination is held to be the truth of literature, and that is also claimed to be the "ultimate truth" about man.

Tagore tells us that imagination is the instrument for realisation of the objects of experience. If this realisation is complete, we need not question its truth. But the inquisitive mind would like to probe into the nature of this imagination. Tagore's understanding in this regard is worth recording:

The world outside us, when it enters into our consciousness becomes quite another kind of world. Though its forms, colours, sounds and the rest remain, they become tinged with

our approval and disapproval, our pleasure and pain; and thus variegated with the manifold qualities of our feelings, this world is wrought into one that is intimately our own. Those who lack a sufficiency of digestive juices cannot effectively convert their food into vital parts of their own body. And similarly, those who are incapable of saturating the outside world with the solvent of their emotions, fail to transform it into their world.⁷⁶

This "world of man" enters into the artist's creations and thus art in a sense, is a recreation and an improved version of what was already created by the artist in nature. Thus artist's own "imagined nature or outside world" enters into his "world of aesthetic creation" bodying forth in the art-work his unique individuality. This individuality is expressed through the artist's style, i.e. his mode of desubjectification. And in this context we would like to submit that art was the result of the artist's response to the "humanized world" and it is bodied forth by the desubjectification activity of the artist. It would not be correct to say that Tagore extended the *Einfühlung* theory from its notion of art as an over-flowing of the self into the object, as feeling the self as object to the contrary conception of art as sucking the object into the Self, as feeling the object as self. It would be equally erroneous to hold that for Tagore, the aesthetic experience was not only a projection or outwardisation of object.⁷⁷ This position is untenable because it fails to account for aesthetic detachment so important for understanding Tagore's idea of universality in art and without this aesthetic detachment no art is possible. The inwardisation is there and it is a psychological process presupposing the aesthetic activity proper. In explaining the growth of human personality Tagore postulates and explains this "inwardisation of objects" and as stimulants to the growth of human personality itself. They help grow human personality, being incorporated in it. Thus incorporated, they form a part of the human personality and they are indistinguishable in the totality of the artist's personality. They are in fact, transformed and transmuted, to use a Brad-leyan phrase, in the larger scheme of the artist's personality

which is used here in the "inclusive sense". When things are objectified in a work of art, they bear the impress of the artist's individuality (when we erroneously call style). So the saying that style (in this sense) is the man, cannot be completely rejected; for herein the meaning of style has not been the same as that of the "technique of externalisation". But Tagore refused to accept style (*Bhaṅgī*) within the scheme of his aesthetics. But the protagonists of the "style in the man" dictum contend that man is not simply knowledge and contemplation; he is will which contains the cognitive moment in itself. An opposed view, i.e. the view that human mind is compartmentalised leads to the concept of impersonality in art. Again the corollary to this impersonality in art is artistic insincerity. In the context of expression in art being a work of self-realisation, the term "aesthetic sincerity" becomes unbecoming and redundant. Tagore has not been very emphatic and pronounced in this regard but his compatriot Croce is quite explicit in his formulations. We may refer to Croce to have a clear understanding of the point. According to Croce, aesthetic sincerity consists in giving adequate expression to the momentary intuitions. It has hardly any ethical aspect. He writes:

Finally sincerity imposed as a duty upon the artist (a law of ethics also said to be a law of aesthetics) rests upon another double meaning. For by sincerity may be meant, in the first place, the moral duty not to deceive one's neighbour and in that case it is foreign to the artist. For indeed he deceives no one, since he gives form to what is already in his soul. He would only deceive if he were to betray his duty as an artist by failing to execute his task in its essential nature. If lies and deceptions are in his soul, then the form which he gives to these things cannot be deceit or lies, precisely because it is aesthetic. If the artist be a charlatan, a liar or a miscreant, he purifies his other self by reflecting it in art. If by sincerity he meant, in the second place, fullness and truth of expression, it is clear that this second sense has no relation

to this ethical concept. The law as both ethical and aesthetic meaning completely different things reveals itself here as nothing but a word used both by ethics and aesthetics.⁷⁸

But maturer Croce comes close to Tagore when we read him in his book *My Philosophy*. He tells us that art is moral and in a sense utilitarian, if moral value is taken to be utilitarian in its axiological character.* However, Croce's identification of intuition and expression makes the concept of aesthetic sincerity absolutely redundant because nothing was ever intuited which was not expressed and vice-versa. We may point out in this connection that an immoral artist is a contradiction in terms for if he is an artist, i.e. has been successful in intuiting and expressing (of course without them he could not have been an artist) he has been true and faithful to his intuition because it was simultaneously the expression as well. So if morality is taken for granted in a work of art, it does not go to undermine the nature of art qua art or limit the freedom of the artist. For to be an artist is to be moral for there is no insincerity on the part of the artist in desubjectifying the subjective feelings. If there were any such insincerity on the part of the artist which did not express the intuited image, then it was neither art, nor intuition, nor expression. Its claim to be art was void *ab initio* and the question of the determination of its nature either as moral or immoral did not arise at all. That is why Tagore thought of morality in art and considered all art as moral, i.e. good. So sincerity, call it ethical or aesthetic, is inherent in the artist and without it art-work fails to achieve its form and this achievement may be "purposiveness without a purpose" or an indefinite purpose of which the artist is faintly aware.

Romain Rolland** agrees with Tagore that sincerity is necessary to enable the artist to produce true artistic creations.

*Herein Croce explicitly advocates the type of views as advocated by Tagore, who considered art as moral.

**His idea of aesthetic sincerity as discussed and elaborated in John Christopher has a moralistic bias. For a detailed discussion of the points raised please see author's book *Aesthetics of Romain Rolland*.

Rolland told us repeatedly that a lack of sincerity in music, and falsity in art make bad art; Christopher's early compositions were not true music for they lacked artistic sincerity: they were written for writing's sake. (We may note en passant that because aesthetic sincerity was lacking, we had "bad art" and "false music" or in the other words we had neither any art nor any music.)

The Artist and his Society

If art is good and consequently moral then it is vitally related to the well-being of the society. The Aristotelian view of catharsis had this good of the society in mind and Plato's condemnation of the poet had the same object in view. Tagore in fact thought of the trinity, "good—beauty—truth"; and their limited identity was evident to him. He, as a critic told us that in art communication was a conscious process because it involved specified activity; what the artist expressed was sharable because it was in the social mind. To use Tagore's words, it was in the "heart of their society".⁷⁹ The task of the great poets of the past was to express with what "oft was thought, but never so well-expressed". It was Tagore's considered opinion that the great authors never tried to be original at the cost of hampering communication; they took the most universal feelings and thoughts (which were also simple in character) for their subject-matter. They consciously addressed the society, and expression was a conscious process. Expression meant communication and to communicate was a natural and conscious desire in man. The poet, in fact, consciously writes such things as will be appreciated by his readers; he expresses that which his fellow beings feel, he being the most conscious point of his time. In a great poet, it is not only that the contemporary period, i.e. his time, was reflected but the entire past peeped through him. That is how the poet is not only the lover of his time but also he represents in a way all that was fine and noble (for him) in the life that preceded him. And herein Tagore comes close to Eliot when he enunciates his position regarding poets⁸⁰ vis-a-vis their society,

past and present. In tradition Eliot found a meeting point of time and the timeless, and thus it helped develop in the poet an impersonal attitude which referred to the contemporary time and at the same time transcended contemporaneity. Consequently, Tagore could describe a poem as a compromise of inspiration, taste, and judgment, on the one hand and public taste, past and present, on the other. (But if individual taste is considered organically related to public taste, and the present with the past or the future then there is no confrontation for the poet in his creative activity.) Whenever the poet creates, he writes for himself, for his readers and for his society present or future. That is how self-expression, for Tagore, is in one respect self-socialisation and it refers not only to the present society but to the future societies as well. If self-expression be self-socialisation, the theory of expression of super-personal reality in art should be taken in the inclusive sense, as explained earlier. If taken in the exclusive sense, the principle of explanation as involved in the idea of self-socialisation will not work. Because, higher ideas cannot be so easily socialised as if we accept the dichotomy of higher and lower in the ethnical sense as applicable in aesthetics. That is why we have so far argued that Tagore's specification of the content of art should be taken in the inclusive sense, i.e. all conceivable experience not only of the poet, but of his society at large (without reference to any particular period of time) may become the content of art. This choosing of content is a matter of intuitive apprehension and in this apprehension the whole social mind works. While remembering how tradition works on the poet and how the past works for the future through the present, we may assert with Tagore that the poet create the timeless while it seems that he was only responding to his environment in his own inimitable way. We may also refer to Brijendra Nath Seal's ideas of the role of society-consciousness and time-consciousness in matters of aesthetic creation, as explained in a subsequent chapter. His idea of the art of the future involved them and we are sure, they in a way explain more eloquently the points that Tagore has been trying to drive home. But this explanation as suggested by Tagore and elaborately worked out

by Seal does not quite adequately explain the phenomenon of a poet being not recognised by his contemporary society, at least by a big slice of it. We know that Milton had to go abegging for a publisher. The story of Johnson is too well known to need repetition. Michael Madhusudan Dutt died unwept and and unsung though posterity judged him to be a great poet. We do not understand how this brute fact of non-recognition of poets and artists by their contemporary society, all the world over, can be explained with the help of this principle of society-consciousness of the artist as reflected in his self-consciousness. But if art is taken to be an unconscious act (act of divine inspiration or an act below the level of reality-consciousness as contended by Croce) the artist may be oblivious of his contemporary society; but this explanation takes away much of his credit and his status as a creator is dwarfed to that of a locus for canalising divine inspiration. Or at best the poet may be looked upon as a morbid creature who simply acts under goading directives from the sub-conscious. Tagore does not subscribe to such views although the play of the sub-conscious has been brought to bear by some critics Tagore's creative genius when they judged Tagore's paintings. He believes in a continuum and in this particular context the mind as conscious, sub-conscious or unconscious may be postulated to explain his variegated creative activities although he considered art to be essentially an active process. And idea of Tagore is quite in keeping with the ancient Indian aesthetic tradition where the poets have been acclaimed as *Krantadarsi*, thus suggesting that in the poetic vision the true and the eternal converge.

The Artist and the Nature Outside

In the aesthetic context, Tagore not only speaks of the conscious artist but also hints at a higher type of consciousness in the artist. He may be said to be conscious of his deeper unity with every thing all around him and with the three points of time—past, present and the future. Tagore believes in a philosophy of immanence, and his poetry needed such a belief as a meta-aesthetic principle of explanation. He felt one with

the outside world, and the beauty in nature gave him an assurance of his spiritual relationship with the world outside. To quote Tagore:

And the man whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness, at once realises the spiritual unity reigning supreme all over differences of race, and his mind no longer awkwardly stumbles over individual facts of separateness in the human world, accepting them as final; he realizes that peace is in the inner harmony which dwells in truth and not in any other adjustment; and that beauty carries an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.

This feeling of oneness gave him a unique vision of reality and a colourful expression of it has been given in his art and literature so rare in modern times. Some of the verses of Tagore have almost an Upaniṣadic ring of identity of soul and nature. Tagore may be said to postulate three principles in this context: (a) A spirit pervading the physical and the mental worlds, (b) a relation of love obtaining between man and nature, and (c) a consequent feeling of oneness with nature, this feeling of identity being divine in essence.

According to Tagore, art is the realisation of the "spiritual in the nature", the disclosing of the spiritual significance of the merely factual, or the brute material. In *Personality* Tagore tells us: "The building of man's true world is the function of art. Man is true where he feels his identity, where he is divine and the divine is the creator in him". So Tagore, quite consistent with his idea of the descent of the universal on individual mind, as explained earlier, speaks of a linking through love of the vast universe with the poet as a postulate for all art creations and through this linking man reacts to his divine nature. Tagore here suggests that by his attaining the divine the individual artist just becomes a locus of the divine activity, which we call art. This conviction of Tagore was inspired by the Indian tradition and belief. We would do well to remember the

words of Havell, who so aptly described the mission of ancient Indian art in the following passage from *Ideals of Indian Art* :

Indian art is not concerned with the conscious striving after beauty as a thing worthy to be sought after for its own sake, its main endeavour is always directed towards the realisation of an idea, reaching through the finite to the Infinite, convinced always that, through the constant effort to express the spiritual origin of earthly beauty, the human mind will take in more and more of the perfect beauty of the Divinity.

Thus herein we find Tagore suggesting the Platonic idea of adumbration. All beauty was divine and beauty in nature or art was the imperfect adumbration of this divine beauty. What beauty we is in nature or art is essentially divine in essence. So God was immanent in nature and He transcended it. The poet loved and worshipped nature, for he knew that through nature the message of God reached him every day. The letters of the King were being delivered to him through natural agencies.* Like Wordsworth, Tagore regarded every aspect of nature as a symbol of beauty. He was not a crude worshipper of nature for its own sake, but he viewed it as an attribute of the divine, "not for the abundance of joy that it brings into life but for the intimations it gives of a higher spiritual life".

Art and the Surplus in Man

This idea of the divinity working in nature and man, and thus investing art with some spiritual significance gives art some divine purpose, a purpose spiritual in character somewhat indefinite and indeterminate. This does not in any way determine the nature of art pragmatically and thereby affect its character as art. Art helps to realise the spirit of oneness as it is considered to be spiritual activity. Psychologically speaking, this feeling of oneness comes from the other regarding

*See *Dakghar*, (*The Post Office*) wherein this idea of the message of the King has been very dramatically presented and sustained throughout.

activity of the spirit. According to a neo-idealist,⁸¹ spirit's activity can be broadly divided into two kinds, knowing and willing. Willing further involves two kinds of activity, economic and ethical, i.e. self-regarding and other-regarding. This other-regarding activity of the spirit makes us feel one with the universe and this feeling of oneness helps us in our quest for the spiritual and the eternal beyond the immediate, temporal interests of our daily life. (That is why Tagore calls art moral.) Tagore in his aesthetics lays so much stress on this other-regarding activity of the spirit that he sometimes identifies nature and art. His subjective philosophy, his concept of the humanised nature, and his idea of the synthetic personality of the artist, all these go to suggest in a way the possibility of an identification of nature and art. The idea of divine pervasiveness finally made this identity possible. This has brought in its train a compromise of content and form in Tagore's aesthetics though he considers expression (i.e. form) to be the primary fact. In an aesthetic context, art is not just nature, but nature deeply felt and meditated upon. A mere catalogue of natural phenomena does not make real art or true poetry, nor does photography constitute the essence of true art. Poetry crystallises the forms of things unknown, and incarnates the ideal in the habitation and shape of the actual. True art is at once the realisation of the ideal and the idealisation of the real, the spirit made flesh. So art and nature cannot be equated without doing violence to their respective natures. This identity will not stand the test of logical scrutiny as there is always a differentia for art that distinguishes it from nature. *Svabhabokti* and *vakrokti* of the ancient Indian aesthetics stress this point. Poetic truth and factual fidelity are two different things. Poetry is truer than fact. It has some higher spiritual reality. So the greatest poetry, Tagore feels, should embody an ideal vision or a true philosophy. Without this philosophic vision, the vision that discerns the fundamental unity of matter and spirit, of being and non-being no great poetry can be created. If it lacks this vision, poetry comes down to the level of mere verse-making, and loses its universal appeal. In Croce's intuition, this vision is there to make it *simplex et unum*, that is to say,

the multiple images were to find their common centre and dissolve in a comprehensive image. But Croce's vision is not Tagore's vision in its expanse or universality. It is rather the poetic vision that Seal endows the poet with and it comprises the race consciousness and the time-consciousness. In a word Seal's poet has that vision of totality which we noted in Tagore. In this vision, the ideal and the real, the past, the present and the future all converge to make Tagore's art *simplex et unum* in his own way.

This philosophic vision of Tagore gives him a sense of totality and a consequent sense of identity with the other. This identity-consciousness does not permit a delimiting of man's endeavours to the will-to-live only. Man must outlive this mere living and do something which bears the stamp of the spirit. This doing something does not concern his immediate animal needs or demands for creature comforts. It is in that region where man is more than an animal responding reflexively to his environment. It is the world of *līlā*, wherein necessity principles of all types are completely forbidden. It is, according to him, the region of the surplus. There are large outlying tracts surrounding the necessities of man, as distinct from animal, where he has objects that are ends in themselves. Herein Tagore's ideas have distinct relations with the ancient Indian texts and commentaries thereon in point. Śāyaṇācārya, the Vedic commentator, wrote: *Yajna hutāsistasya odanasya sarvajagatkarnabhuta Brahmabhedana stutih kriyate* (After the completion of the sacrificial rites, the food offering which is left over is praised because it is symbolical of Brahmā, the original source of the universe). According to this explanation, Brahmā is boundless in his superfluity, which inevitably finds expression in the eternal world process. Here we have, according to Tagore⁸² the doctrine of the genesis of creation and, therefore, of the origin of art. Man has a fund of emotional energy which is not wholly occupied with his self-preservation. The surplus seeks an outlet in the creation of art, and man's civilisation is built upon this surplus. Tagore seems to talk loosely of art and civilisation as co-terminous. The surplus theory, even though applicable to art cannot be so applicable

to all aspects of civilisation, e.g. to craft, technology, etc. Thus civilisation and art cannot be equated without violence to their respective meanings. Civilisation is a complex affair that includes not merely art but also the crafts, science, technology, philosophy, etc. Art may have its source in man's surplus energy. But the same cannot be said of science, technology, and crafts, which arise from the peremptory necessity of adjustment to environment, without which man would lead a miserable existence. (Tagore may be considered to have extended the Spencerian surplus energy theory to civilisation in all its aspects, theoretical as well as practical. This certainly will not bear critical examination in the light of the facts of the case.) Again, Tagore tells us that this surplus in man makes him what he is culturally and aesthetically. Having a little respite from his struggle for existence, he has occasions to look at nature and nature enchants him and looks like a symbol of the divine. Here it seems that Tagore believes in a philosophy of immanence and the surplus theory leads him to the concept of divine origination. When he thus attunes himself to the divine which is immanent in nature, his soul overflows with emotion. And the poet creates, (being in a state of emotional exuberance) in a fit of ecstasy rather Platonic in essence.

A noted modern art critic⁸³ probably means this type of ecstasy when he defines art as "the process of arousing aesthetic emotions by the creation of significant forms devised in purple moments of spiritual exaltation". This spiritual exaltation may be favourably compared to the emotional exuberance verging on ecstasy and they all suggest the poet to be the locus of divine inspiration. This trend in modern Indian aesthetics echoes our ancient traditional thinking in point. Valmiki, the epic poet, sang: *Mā niṣād pritiṣṭhām tvama gama śāśvai samā* (O though hunter, thou shalt never in thy life establish thyself); and this poetic outburst sprang from the very excess of human emotions. It was the expression of an excess, where the whole soul stands revealed. These emotional expressions go far beyond the bounds of utility consideration. Whenever a feeling is aroused in our hearts which is far in excess

of the amount that can be completely absorbed by the object which produced it, it comes back to us and makes us conscious of ourselves by its resurgent waves. That is why man, of all creatures, knows himself; his impulse of knowledge comes back to him in excess. He feels his personality more deeply than other creatures because his power of feeling is too great to be exhausted by his objects and these emotions require an outlet or expression. Therefore, Tagore concludes, in art man reveals himself and not his objects.⁸⁴ (There is a relation of corresponding variation between the poet's personality and his poetry and Tagore postulates such a relation.) He tells us: "Art we create and art ends by creating us. It is both our creation as well as creative of our personality. When we stop and think and create we are overwhelmed no doubt". This over-whelming, according to Tagore, comes of the impact of the Infinite on the finite. The above observation regarding poetry and the poet's personality may as well have application to other fields of human activity. We may as well say that in the domain of morality we create goodwill as goodwill creates us. Thus there is a proximity or closeness between ethical and aesthetic situations. It is a truism to say that in every act of will, we will not merely see an object, but also ourselves thereby, and become a different individual.

It will be interesting to note that Tagore in his observations in the present context has been influenced by the traditional characteristics of epic poetry. According to him art being the expression of human personality suggests that personality must carry in its womb the germs of all great virtues to make great art possible. A robust optimism, a faith in the future of humanity as a whole, should inspire a true poet. Pessimism, Tagore tells us, is incompatible with true artistic creation.* Pessimistic poetry stands self-condemned. It is the rhythm of life that expresses itself in the rhythm of poetry. A distorted soul or a worried mind cannot produce what we call

*Tagore himself gave the lie direct to his own assertion by creating exuberant poetry in *Sandhyā Sangit*.

poetry.* It is true that in Tagore's works, we do not come across unrequited tragedy or meaningless sufferings. Sufferings for Tagore have a purpose, a *teos*, which instantaneously reconcile the poet and his readers to his boundless sufferings. Sufferings viewed against a backdrop of the possibility of a greater life acquire new meaning for Tagore and like Bradley sometimes he considers this world as the Vale of Soul-making. His purpose is that of a discoverer, bent upon discovering the benign hand of his *Jivan-devatā* in all his sufferings and privations. When so viewed, the poet's sufferings turn into an ocean of delight and his attachment grows all the more to his source of suffering. He must not get disenchanted with the world if he is to create.

Tagore tells us that the true poet finds his happiness in the world and he who finds nothing valuable in this world cannot write good poetry. Disinterested love is the true artistic attitude towards nature and creation. This disinterested love for nature results in disinterested joy in the field of artistic creation and appreciation. (We know that Immanuel Kant in his Third Critique said that disinterested joy was the end of art.) In the same vein Tagore tells us that the ultimate feeling in true art should be one of triumph and satisfaction. The poet sometimes may describe the tumult of the soul, but only to conclude that underneath it there is a settled peace. Thus peace—a lively peace full of the grandeur of a noble soul—is the last word in all true art. That is how in Indian aesthetics the later commentators wanted *Śāntam* to be admitted separately in the category of recognised *rasas*, thus raising the number to nine from eight. Tagore virtually subscribes to and identifies himself with this new move. He thinks of art as something growing and refuses to accept finality in art in any form. So is art criticism which is the critical study of art. The protagonists of epic poetry may cry hoarse that an optimistic or hopeful view of life ought to be the content of great art and Tagore, for the time being, may have accepted their position; but this does not seem

*This may be psychologically true. Poetry is 'always "emotions recollected in tranquillity"'.

to be abiding with Tagore. Even Tagore's earlier professions do not bear him out in regard. We have already noted that in Tagore's view, art is the expression of the artist's personality, and a sense of failure or of the futility of life is as much a phenomenon of the artist's personality as an exultant optimism or a rosy view of life. Tagore's poems in *Sandhyā Sangīt* are instances in point. In these poems the poet's soul does not find any way out and he gropes in darkness. His spirit is fettered and the poet wants to break through the walls that surround him. Though these poems in *Sandhyā Sangīt* do not carry any message of hope for mankind, yet they are specimens of true poetry being a splendid image of the struggle which individuals have to go through in their periods of crisis of faith. This uncertainty has a romantic fervour and an aesthetic indeterminateness which captivates the imagination of a true poet. Such uncertain situations, doubts and suspense have some dramatic elements in them which sustain the poet through all his sufferings and make possible the birth of true poetry. This was true of Tagore's own sufferings as transmuted in his *charismatic* personality and it was true of other great poets as well. A few examples from the earlier Bengalee poets may sustain this contention.

When the great poet of the last century, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, sings of his own failure of life, he is as much expressing himself in higher poetic form as any optimistic poetry that deserves to be ranked as the best poetry in literature. Hem Chandra Bandhopadhyaya lamenting on life as a great illusion and a hoax, is not less poetic in his rhymes than any optimistic poet in his most exalted moods. Such examples may be multiplied. These poets are in the happy company of Shakespeare who created great illusory characters representing individual human existences. Here we do not so much repudiate Tagore (as Tagore had a more viable position to offer) as we argue against the traditional protagonists of epic poetry. Optimism, vigour and robustness and some such characteristics do not matter much as we have already pointed out that anything or everything could be the content of art if and when it was properly fashioned in the imagination of a true poet. We agree

with Shelley that our sweetest songs *may* tell of the saddest thoughts, which are too deep for tears. Luigi Pirandello, the Nobel Laureate of 1934, in his novels, dramas, and short stories, bears neither any message for mankind nor any gospel for posterity. He is a professed pessimist with a dry heart. All through Pirandello's works, there is that haunting feeling of sadness and despair. His world is a world of frustration and aridity, illusion and irrationality. He has no religion—no God. But, no one denies the genius of Pirandello. His works *The Old and the Young*, the *Late Martin Pascal*, and, above all, his short stories, will ever live to enrich the treasures of world literature.

The Concrete Universal and the Universality of Arts

In the writings of a contemporary of Tagore (Ācārya Brajendra Nath Seal) we may notice a fervent faith in art being an objective criticism of life. He mentioned Matthew Arnold who in this context told us that poetry was the criticism of life. Tagore's concept of art as interpreting nature might be linked up with Seal's (and for that Arnold's) criticism. Contemporary Indian aesthetics in the wake of Tagore and Seal took up this tenet of criticism or interpretation in right earnest and we hear its echo in some of the modern critics. A similar view has been held by Atul Chandra Gupta (in his book *Kāvya Jigñāsā*, p. 16). While criticising or interpreting the facts of life the poet places them against a bigger perspective and this attaches a new meaning to them. Tagore's idea of *chandas* or harmony as discovered from a synoptic view of life offers such a principle of explanation and we have already referred to it. The spirit of the whole enlivens and transmutes the drab principles of life and they are given a new meaning. Art expresses the universal in and through the particular, in the sense that it is sharable and communicable. The feelings expressed by the artist in a particular gestalt are his own feelings, and yet they are shared by one and all. "This universal element of art can only come into being", Tagore writes, "if we can realize the spiritual unity of life and matter, if we can rightly ascertain the

relation between the universal and the particular". Art deals with the concretely Universal, that is, the universal immanent in the particular. This universalism in art does not thrive at the cost of the individual for it is particular-oriented. The particular configuration is the basis wherefrom its communicability originates. The ensured universal acceptance is the acceptance of the individual. So it offers us a paradoxical situation wherein the universal is being sustained in the particular in the sense that without a reference to the particular the universal approbation ceases to exist. So in a way the particular is the locus of the universal as is found in this aesthetic context. While connoting this universality the aesthetic language does not speak in terms of the logical form, "all...are..." it has a language of its own and it has a syntactic character. In order to explain this universality and its peculiar character Tagore takes to a language of similes and analogies. To quote Tagore: "The true universalism is not breaking down the walls of one's own house but the offering of hospitality to one's guests and neighbours". What it means is that the individual does not change his character as particular but at the same time it is understood by all, i.e. by those who are *Sahṛdayas*. Aesthetic activity bodies forth in individual images. The symbol evolves similar references and the "referents" which are referred to by these references are absolutely peculiar to them. We have discussed the problem earlier and in the present context it would be sufficient to point out that an art-work being peculiarly individual paradoxically enjoys a type of universality unknown in other forms of human activity. So in the ordinary sense the particular, as an individual art-work is, does not express the universal, nor the particular is an imperfect imitation of the universal. We may say that the universality of art is not a result of the latent universality in the sensuous particular. Moreover, there are serious objections against the view that the particular expresses the universal, in the ordinary sense of the word expression. The Buddhist nominalist or rather, the particularist, does not believe in the universal except as a conceptual void (*vikalpa vṛtti*). The Sāṃkhya Absolute is a negation both of the universal and of the particular and is

pure undifferentiated consciousness. The universal is expressed through the particular only for the Aristotelian or the neo-Hegelian like Bosanquet. Tagore might go with Bosanquet, a believer in unique individuality of things and beings.

Now we may suggest how this peculiar aesthetic universality is achieved. Art undeniably expresses our subjective reactions to life. What is enjoyed in art is the success of the objectification of our subjective reactions to life and its varied situations. We have already noted that the so-called universal element in art is nothing but the successful objectification or, one may say, the objective embodiment of the evanescent subjective emotions. This universal appeal of art is not derived from the latent universality of the particular as expressing the universal. It comes from the successful desubjectification of the artist's feelings which in turn evokes a similar pattern of feelings in the reader and the spectator. For the reader or the spectator, to become a *sahṛdaya*, it is incumbent upon him to go through a process of *sādhana*. Tagore speaks of it and he practised it himself in order to be a perfect artist. What such an artist creates, is acceptable to people similarly endowed. This is the sense in which aesthetic universality is understood.

This paradox of aesthetic universality has been brought to the fore by such an eminent thinker as Bertrand Russell; he contends that Beethoven's symphonies cannot be regarded as universal as they are not the creation of a universal mind and as they are purely personal to Beethoven. Russell means that the symphony is not like a mathematical truth which is an object to all minds and uses the mind of the individual as merely the occasion of its formulation. But Tagore's explanation is quite different; it has already been pointed out. He gives us a negative prescription and it has a Vedantic ring of a negative approach. He tells us to remove the impediments and once it is done, art-appreciation comes on its own. We may quote *Thoughts from Tagore*:

But it has to be admitted that everyone ought to appreciate Beethoven's creation, that if there is no deficiency of the

mind, everyone must appreciate it. When with proper training the oppositions of ignorance and of unfamiliarity have been overcome, the appreciation of the best composer is assured and can be impeded only in some particular men as listeners.

Thus we find that Tagore pleads for the removal of "ignorance and unaccustomedness" as the condition precedent for a proper appreciation of Beethoven's symphonies.

Vedantic influence (the influence of the Upaniṣads) is quite pronounced on Tagore and his life-philosophy reflects this influence. We may suggest here that in the formulation of these negative conditions for art appreciation, Tagore was influenced though distantly, by the negative approach of *Advaita-vedanta*. The *Neti-vāda* might have helped him to formulate the negative conditions in the context of his idea of *sādhana*.

So it is evident that Tagore postulates the removal of ignorance in the appreciator (and that involves *sādhana*) as a condition precedent for all types of aesthetic appreciation. A *sahṛdaya* is not born out of the blue but he must pass through the rigours of a strenuous discipline. All these conditions are there so that the appreciator may revive the poet's intuition in his own imagination, i.e. he may re-create in his imagination what the poet had created originally. So appreciation is preceded by creation and the creator likewise must be well-disciplined so that he could desubjectify his subjective feelings in so many beautiful images. On ultimate analysis, this aesthetic universality is found to be dependent on (a) a successful desubjectification on the part of the artist, and (b) a proper preparedness on the part of the appreciator. Without them, no arts appreciation is possible and Tagore is quite clear in his views on this point. The type of desubjectification as referred to above may be found in Shakespeare and Kālidāsa, Rembrandt and Picasso, Raphael and Milton and it makes true art and ensures its universal acceptance only when there are *sahṛdayas*. Art appreciation is certainly not universal in the sense in which hatred, love, and anger claim universality. We use it in a limited sense for it involves *sādhana*. Tagore's

illustrious nephew Abanindranath also supports Rabindranath in his formulation of this concept of *sādhāna* both in art creation and art appreciation.

Art: Its Aim, Reality and Significance

The idolatry of form in the West, Tagore tells us, is due to a misunderstanding of the aim of art. The aim of art is not a realisation of form, as absolutely divorced from the content. The realisation of spirit is what art aims at and this realisation is done through self-objectification. This reference to the monadic spirit is evident in the traditional Indian theory of art that "the outward shape by which the content is made perceptible is merely there for the sake of the mind and spirit". The artist tries to represent the ideal, i.e. the complex image in reference to his own imagination. The truth, as it is, cannot be taken to the world of art without having some relation to the apprehending mind, and where it is so related to the apprehending mind it becomes real. In this real of art, the ideal is realised in being fused and synthesised with the rest; sculpture, poetry, painting, music, and all the rest of the arts betray this ideal content bodied forth through their respective media. When we speak of the ideal content of art, we necessarily refer to a humanised content and this humanised content comes through the humanised nature. Nature as humanised, i.e. in relation to man, becomes cognisable and real for him. Nature in itself may be true but it is certainly not real (*vāstava*) for him. Herein we propose to bring in the Kantian duality as Tagore himself has suggested the same in a way. In one of his articles⁸⁵ he tells us that the real for him was truth as related to human consciousness, as coloured by human imagination, as given a rounded shape and form by the human mind. If this form is called beauty, then it is only formal in character. This "form" meant for him a form-in-content and it included the real and the ideal elements in art as according to Tagore's definition the real implied an inclusion of the element of of the Kantian thing-in-itself) is to include the ideal at least to ideality. To be real (as distinguished from truth in the sense

some extent; real has a reference to the poet's imagination and mental reconstruction. If beauty is equated with this re-formed truth, i.e. truth as becoming real in relation to a human mind (as we find in Tagore), then beauty could be looked upon as the ultimate significance of art-activity. When Tagore refuses to accept beauty as the ultimate significance of art, he takes the word in the western sense, i.e. in the purely formal sense as completely divorced from a reference to its corresponding content-reference. To us, it appears that Tagore took beauty in a syntactic sense and as such it left nothing outside its scope. A synoptic view encompassed the aesthetic view and that is why the so-called ugly in nature could be well-accommodated in the world of art. This world of art is essentially anthropocentric and as such subjective in character. The naïve content (Referent), the art-content (Reference), and the symbol are all found together in the imagination of the artist or the appreciator, and the ideal and the true get fused into the real in art. This real in art is the beauty in art, and that is how in the earlier lines we referred to Tagore's acceptance of the Kantian theory of the identity of the true and the beautiful. To Tagore, as to Indian thought in general, beauty is not a mere fact but it is a "fact as appearing to me". So it cannot be objectively surveyed. A subjective survey is possible and that is the only possibility in the domain of art. Tagore admits of it and there he is in the happy company of many modern critics such as Collingwood. The element of ideality in art transcends the symbol or the merely presented. It is pregnant with suggestiveness or *yanjanā*. This is not amenable to scientific calculation and objective evaluation. It is infinitely elastic and it has a reference to Universal Being. We may quote Tagore in point: "Beauty is the ideal of perfect harmony which is in the Universal Being; truth the perfect comprehension of the universal mind".

In the West, this reality-consciousness was (for Tagore it was truth-consciousness) denied on the art level by a number of art critics and art philosophers, and they have done it rightly. We have already noted that Croce subscribed to this view. Thomas Hardy is with this group. Hardy has been quoted⁸⁶

as writing: "Art is concerned with seemings only, the mission of art being to record impressions, not convictions". Intuition, however, in the words of Croce, is the "undifferentiated unity of the perception of the real and of the simple image of the possible". Gentile shares Croce's activist idealism. He defines art as "the exaltation of the subject released from the chains of the real."* Even if the matter is borrowed from nature and history it "is not there for its own sake but for the soul's life, for its feeling". It represents the 'I' as it stands in its subjective immediacy.⁸⁷

In Tagore's idea of intuition, we do not oppose ourselves as empirical beings to external reality (because we humanise nature) but we simply objectify our impressions, whatever they may be. "Intuition reveals character, individual physiognomy". Tagore's observation that art is the expression of selected personality, suggests the same thing. For Tagore's conception of art has reference to reality and, in his opinion, the artistic excellence is determined by its proximity to "reality" and not to truth in the sense of correspondence, its verification being an impossibility. In this compass of artistic reality the Infinite condescends to accommodate itself as the Infinite in relation to a human mind (artist's mind in this case), becomes finite and as such real. So in art, the Infinite peeps through the symbol and the Infinite is thus humanised. This humanised Infinite and the humanised nature give directions to our spiritual development and art as a form of spiritual activity is thereby stimulated. While explaining the universality of art, we have pointed out Tagore's idea of the descent of the universal on the individual and Tagore calls it *Viśvamānava-sattā*. A critic⁸⁸ points out some similarity between this universal humanity and the poet's idea of *Jīvan-dévatā*. But we may suggest that their identity or a close resemblance will not be tenable as *Jīvan-dévatā* is essentially a person whereas the concept of universal

*Croce's intuition, if considered as not amenable to the distinction of form and content would come very close to Tagore's concept of the real, in art as understood as "truth in relation to human imagination". But Gentile's real is different from Tagore's.

humanity is an abstraction. Moreover the contention that as *Jivan-dévatā* inspired the poet's variegated and colourful activities and his ideas and ideals so the *viśva-Mānava sattā* inspired the poet to attain the aesthetic heights actually attained by Tagore is a pointer to the compartmentalisation of human mind. This negates the idea of art being a reaction of the total human personality, which we have expounded earlier. Again if aesthetic creations are attributed to a different faculty, other than thinking, feeling, and willing, the three fundamental functions of human mind and art-inspiration is traced to this concept of universal humanity then these two extra principles for explaining art-activity and its genesis, must justify themselves. We consider them to be redundant as the known principles of explanation as enunciated by Tagore are sufficient to explain the aesthetic activity in its various details, and even in its transcendental suggestiveness. In his article entitled "Tathya O Satya"⁸⁹ he tells us of this principle of "expression which gives us a taste of truth through the presented sense-data (as is done through the art-symbol). The taste is of the one and of the Infinite". So when expression as a principle of explanation is sufficient, postulation of extravagant hypothesis is contrary to the Law of parsimony as laid down in logic.

Again, Tagore in his article entitled "Saundarya"⁹⁰ distinguishes between truth and beauty and considers God to be a true God. A God who is true and real has a sense of necessity all around Him. He is not exhausted therein; He is boundless; He is joy incarnate. Whereever there is joy, there is freedom. The *Upaniṣads* characterised God as pure bliss. He is the abode of pure bliss because He is absolutely free. Tagore contends that joy and freedom go hand in hand. Art being a source of joy must be absolutely free, completely unfettered by any form of necessity. In nature truth is bodied forth in natural laws and joy or *ānanda* incarnates itself in beautiful forms. In a world where natural laws prevail, we are slaves to those domineering laws and in the world of beauty we are no slaves to those laws. We move about freely in that world of delight, in that sphere of beautiful shapes and forms. So beauty in art is not equated with natural beauty if it is governed by the

laws of nature. To be consistent with Tagore's idea of freedom as bodied forth in his idea of beauty (as synonymous with *ānanda* as a metaphysical principle of explanation), we may draw a distinction between natural beauty and artistic beauty. And taking into consideration the role of imagination in making art (beauty) synonymous with *ānanda* (as a metaphysical principle of explanation and not merely a psychological phenomenon), we may point out that Tagore's idea of harmony (*sumiti*) is created by imagination and in this harmony resides the aesthetic joy which is synonymous with beauty. Looked at from this point of view coherence or harmony (*sumiti*) and beauty are synonymous. This artistic beauty as including the ugly in nature as well may be differentiated from beauty in nature; but this differentiation would be untenable from the Tagoreite view point; because *sumiti* (coherence or harmony) as found in art, may be found in nature as well when we view nature as a whole. The ugly in nature and the ugly in art are the resultant effects of viewing things in a limited perspective. When the ugly in nature becomes beauty in art, it is because of a larger perspective which includes both the beautiful and the ugly in nature. This larger perspective gives us a sense of coherence wherein all that are known as the "beautiful and the ugly in nature" are suitably accommodated and this accommodation gives us the sense of a coherent whole and a feeling of joy or *ānanda*. So in art, we have this sense of beauty and for that this sense of a coherent whole. This sense of beauty and this sense of a coherent whole cannot be called a before and after phenomenon, one following the other because they could be just simultaneous. *Ānanda* (joy) cannot be similarly called an effect of the sense of coherence as it is not psychologically tenable. The exclamatory outburst on seeing a thing of beauty and the immediate joyous response thereto lead us to think that this sense of coherence or harmony, this sense of beauty and the emotion of joy are simultaneous and that is why the whole aesthetic response has been characterised as an intuitive apprehension of an object of art. So we think that Tagore's seeming deviation from his earlier position that the creation of beauty was the purpose of art activity does not

carry much sense. Tagore himself tells us in *Sāhityér Pathé* that art does not aim at creating beauty but by creating forms which give us a sense of coherence aims at giving us delight. He brings in the sense of coherence or harmony (*sumiti*) to replace the sense of beauty in art and tells us that this sense of harmony was the source of *ānanda*. Tagore takes stock of the whole situation psychologically omitting to analyse the respective concepts used. We may suggest with due deference to Tagore that he did not deviate from his earlier position as for all practical purposes his idea of beauty and his idea of harmony or coherence appear to be synonymous to us. The only differentia appears to be the concept of the ugly. Tagore seems to argue that this coherence includes the ugly whereas the beautiful does not so include the ugly. But Tagore's definition of beauty as harmony, as a handmaid of imagination, as one that gives us joy virtually makes the position of ugly relative and dependent on our circumscribed viewpoint. To be strictly logical, when viewed from a total perspective the ugly in Tagore's aesthetics ought to have disappeared. And this bigger perspective is the product of imagination. In art both the beautiful and the ugly as found in nature could be accommodated because it gives us a wider perspective created by imagination and this total view is the source of delight. Metaphysically speaking this sense of coherence as synonymous with the total view is another name for *ānanda*. So when Tagore speaks of *sumiti* (a sense of coherence or harmony) he does not drift very far away from his position when he spoke of beauty as the aim of art or literature, for, on ultimate analysis, they appear to be synonymous to us. It will be rash to note a change in Tagore's aesthetic position simply because Tagore uses a different word and makes some admission without going into the meanings of the words used. In the passage quoted below Tagore definitely tells us how the concept of beauty enlarges our perspective so essential for making proper aesthetic judgments. In *Pañcabhūta* Tagore tells us:

Just as a spider spreads its web while itself remaining out of the centre of it, similarly our Soul, seated at the Centre,

is active in establishing an intimate relation with its surroundings: it ever makes the ugly beautiful, the distant near and the stranger friendly. It is building thousands of bridges between the Self and the not self. The thing we call beauty is its own creation. Beauty is but a bridge between the self and the matter.

The passage suggests that the ugly in nature becomes beautiful in art and it is due to the artist's play of imagination, thereby implying an enlargement or perspective. It bridges the spiritual and the material thereby implying that the so-called material is essentially spiritual in character. The principle of joy resides in this phenomenon of beauty. But when Tagore speaks of the upaniṣadic joy, as explained earlier, it becomes a metaphysical principle of explanation. Thus the identity of joy and beauty has been affirmed by Tagore again and again:

In fact it may be said that what is joyful is felt as beauty and that is the material for literature. The means through which, literature evoked the sense of beauty was not at all important; the depth of realisation was the hall-mark of the beautiful.⁹²

So herein Tagore speaks of *ānanda* as the ultimate significance of art and in this context he is very clear in suggesting that the technique of art and its subject matter or art-content are not at all important for making art what it is. We do not suggest thereby that Tagore herein asserts that all importance of the formal quality in art. Tagore's form is beauty and it is identical with harmony or coherence and this harmony is the harmony of the art content. So Tagore's form is a form-in-content and we suggest that no form is of any significance without the content. Form and content cannot be distinguished and their distinction is only nominal. If one is a nominalist, he may uphold this distinction without meaning any difference in reality. So when Tagore speaks of beauty as not the ultimate significance of art, he takes beauty in a formal sense, as used by the western critics. But his own meaning is different and for him it can

be safely said that beauty was the ultimate significance of art. Beauty being spiritual in character and all the universe coming out of Ānanda (as conceived in the *Upaniṣads*), this beauty and the principle of joy can be considered identical and we have already pointed it out. Any matter, extra-mental and objective in the sense of being independent of the seer was rejected by Tagore and he was a confirmed subjectivist.⁹³ So to be strictly loyal to the metaphysical tenets as expounded by Tagore we may say that when both form and content are mental and they are found in unison on all occasions of experience, we do not think that form and content could be given disparate and separate characters; they are just conventional names without any clear cut meaning or significance. Tagore's acceptance of conventional terms did not quite fit in with the meaning he understood by intuitive apprehension. That sometimes led to semantic difficulties.

So the above position does away with the determination of the nature of art content. Anything and everything can become the content of art with equal felicity. This position again, is compatible with the absolute freedom of the artist as advocated by Tagore. This freedom, in turn, is the pre-requisite of the idea of art as *ānanda*. So art-content for Tagore, becomes omnibus in character. A casual meeting with a former lady-love in a railway compartment, a wild flower on a crannied wall, a Trojan War or the tragic death of a woman of ill-fame, are all equally admissible as themes of true poetry. What is true of poetry for Tagore, is equally true of his songs as well. He does not acknowledge any artificial determination anywhere. In Rabindra-sangeet, we find the tunes varying from the strictly classical to the frankly original passing through all the phases of Baul, Kirtan and the mixed: so do the wordings of the songs include every emotion that naturally found expression in music, ranging from the love of the divine to the most delicate feelings recorded by the human heart and passing through every phase of love which human nature is capable of. Everything get fused in his music, which had a free, simple and unembellished expression through this special media. It has been said if Tagore's music that it was simple and unadorned. This is

evident from the fact that those of his songs which approximated the classical type mostly belonged to the Dhrupad and those in the lighter vein to the Thumri style, bereft of flourishes. It has been argued by some that Tagore's preference for simplicity inspired him not to use Kheyal and Tuppa so much so as Dhrupad and Thumri and that is why Tanas were very sparingly and judiciously used. The lightness of the rhythms in his music was the inevitable corollary of the position stated above. It follows from the simple expression that Tagore took recourse to. Slow measures were generally used in order to give scope and opportunity to the singer to expand his melody. In Rabindra-sangeet they have been naturally excluded because such impromptu expansions were ruled out in Tagore's music. This exclusion could also be explained from our interpretation of intuition. When Rabindranath or for that any artist worth the name, intuited the song as a complete aesthetic entity, he had a vision of the whole. That vision, cannot be allowed to be distorted by the vagaries of the singer through his 'frills and furbelows' added to the original structure and thus destroy the original image of the poet, who gave a unique form to the song commensurate with his unique intuition. The emotive meaning in Tagore's songs is also very important and it, in a way, determined the total image of the art-work. So any freedom given to the singer in distorting this meaning was contrary to the original meaning, intended by the poet. Within his meaning of expression he expressed all possible contents of experience, actual and imagined and this happened in his music, painting and poetry as well. Mukerji⁹⁴ while noting the peculiar characteristics of Tagore's music, cautions us to differentiate them from mere blendings, as blendings were inadmissible in his concept of art as an individuality. The peculiar features of Tagore's songs are as follows:

Technically, Tagore's words are to be clearly enunciated. The Hindi words of classical pieces were on the other hand extremely ill-defined. But Tagore's words are to be neatly pronounced. The reasons are two (a) the words are poetic; the drug of music on words, poetic and unpoetic in nature, has to be modified in the interest of poetry; and (b) Tagore's own personal

equation is on the side of the spoken language of Calcutta and its environs. These technical reasons improved the quality of rural songs as poetry and made them sophisticated. The technical sophistry consisted in the use of Komal Gandhar along with Suddha Gandhar, Komal Madhyam along with Tibra madhyam, Komal Dhaivat along with Suddha Dhaivat and Komal Nikhad along with Suddha Nikhad; sometimes Komal Gandhar alone would be used for Suddha Gandhar. The *tālas* were very simple and played in simple beats. But the speciality of Tagore's music, classical, combined, and folk was in the use of his grace-notes and curves. Mir (grace-note) was common to all forms of Indian music, but it was peculiar to Tagore's compositions. It was, so to say, closely attached to words, more or less in the manner or Dhrupad as it used to be, that is without too many *bol-tans*, *Gamaks* and excessive *bantwara*. The same was with curves. That dhrupadic mir was common to folk-songs too. This combination was peculiar to Tagore. In that sense Tagore's nearness was old.

The structure of the peculiar property of Tagore's music was the fact that each song was an independent entity with the result that each entity carved out a kingdom fit for itself, each kingdom ruled itself in its own ways and each rule formulated its own regulations.

So this unique individuality is also present there in Tagore's music and makes it what it is. Successful expression gave art this individuality and whatever and whenever anything and everything was expressed they assumed the total aesthetic character implying unique individuality. In his article entitled "Tathya O Satya"⁹⁵ Tagore referred to this unique individuality of the art-work implying thereby that its reality was quite different from the scientific truth on the one hand and meta-physical truth on the other. As for fact and truth, art had no interest in them. It busied itself with reality which was peculiarly its own. Truth in relation to the artist's imagination became the content of art and it gave us a type of reality nowhere to be found under the sun. Only a *sahridaya* could create approximation of the original image as intended by the artist. Artist's imagination was omnibus and nothing could

lay beyond the spell of his imagination. In the formulation of this position, Tagore was close to ancient Indian traditions in aesthetics.

Bharat Muni, one of the oldest writers on poetic in Sanskrit remarks that there is nothing in the realm of being or in that of thought which does not subserve the aesthetic purpose. To be precise, no science, no art, no technology, no artifact, no methodology, no activity, in a word, none is there which stands excluded from the stage-craft, as being unfit for its subject-matter. What Bharat Muni means by stage-craft is equally applicable to fine arts in general. No distinction is made here between one topic and another as regards fitness for poetic treatment. One subject is as good as another and there is no one specified subject on which a fine poem could not be written. As this restriction of content cannot be upheld, so, as a logical corollary, the proximity of content in art to natural phenomena or to historical order is absolutely redundant. Tagore himself accepts this theory and his myriad descriptions of things and beings uphold his faith in this profession. His characters of Karna, Duryodhona and Gandhari do not very much resemble the known epic characters. The poet's intuitive apprehension of things has been given by him a higher value than the one given to things as they happen in nature and this position he makes amply clear in many of his poems and prose writings.⁹⁶ He tells us that from a distance the true work of art gives us the impression of the real (in the sense of something as existing in nature) but viewed at close quarters the illusion is dissipated. The only evidence of truth in art exists when it compels us to say, I see. A donkey we may pass by in nature, but a donkey in art we must acknowledge even if it be a creature that deplorably ignores all its natural history, even if it resembles a mushroom at its head and a palm-leaf at its tail. This peculiar donkey is real for him for it is the donkey that came out of the working of the poet's imagination on a donkey that is present in nature. So by realism Tagore does not mean naturalism. (Of course, a closer scrutiny will reveal that pure naturalism is not possible either.) His position as a realist (his realism meant nature in relation to human imagination)

brings him very close to Abanindranath, his celebrated nephew who also held a similar view of realism so very different from conventional naturalism. To put it symbolically; Suppose X in nature is sought to be depicted in art. Firstly we never know X as it is, i.e. the thing in itself in X . So an objective understanding of X is an impossibility. When A , B , and C view X they have three different images of X based on their respective personal equations and idiosyncracies. When they try to externalise their different impression of X , the expressed images become all the more different depending on their respective abilities for desubjectification. So X becomes X_1 , X_2 and X_3 in the hands of A , B , and C . They may be all realists in their own way but when objectively judged (if ever such a judgment were at all possible) they could be nothing more than phenomenals in art. So when we call Tagore a realist, we bear this difficulty in mind. But Tagore could be legitimately called a realist according to the meaning of realism as accepted by him and explained by us in the foregoing pages.

So Tagore's realism is the realism of form-in-content and as such for Tagore, art is not nature, nor the true representation of it. It is mere technique* (as the Chinese art critics call it) and there is no prescribed rule at all to guide the artist. We have named it "expression" in the present context. Expression is art and it is self-expression. In his article "Viśva-Sāhitya" Tagore upholds this principle of "self-expression" along with his theory of Surplus. This expression was not utility-oriented, nor was it prompted by any external necessity. If expression or for that purpose, self-expression was prompted by any type of necessity, it could be characterised as internal necessity. Tagore's postulation of the artistic urge in man as fundamental does not admit of any empirical verification. Being inspired by this necessity the artist creates; he neither makes, nor discovers. His role is that of a creator,⁹⁷ this process of creation is also the process of self-expression and through this self-expression the artist realises himself. The infinite works in collaboration with the poet's imagination and widens the dimension of the

*Not technique in the sense of "technique of externalisation".

poet's perspective. The artist creates his reality and it is different from the creation of the divine creator. We may call it re-creation. This nature of re-creation has been explained by Tagore in *The Religion of Man* and in this context he has referred to other allied and cognate concepts. To quote his words: "We can make truth ours by actively modulating its inter-relations. This is the work of art For reality is not based in the substance of things but in the principle of relationship"* Reality is the definition of the Infinite which relates truth to the person. Reality is human; it is what we express. When we are intensely aware of it, we are aware of ourselves and it gives us delight. We live in it, we always widen its limits. Our arts and literature represent this creative activity which is fundamental in man. And this re-creation, as the handiwork of spirit as artist, is of much higher spiritual value. It is poetic truth far removed from truth in the ordinary sense of correspondence with the factual reality. Tagore tells us of the higher spiritual value of such poetic truth in unambiguous terms, drawing a distinction between fact and Reality. Reality in Tagore's scheme of aesthetics is of much higher value. What is factual is not always real. In *Sāhityér Svarūp*⁹⁸ he tells how man knows his failings and shortcomings to be factual but does not accept them as real. Sometimes the real is created along the line of the factual but certainly this real is not identical with the factual. Art is one of the ways of creating the real and this is identical with self-expression in Tagore's view.⁹⁹ Tagore is not much concerned whether his notion of the real is accorded recognition by scientists and historians. This reality he writes, gives us pure joy and assures its acceptance.¹⁰⁰ Reality is thus created in the creative imagination of the artist. That is why Tagore proclaims that the poet's imagination has far greater importance than the real place of factual occurrence; his poignant words attributed to *Nārada* in *Nārada-Valmiki* dialogue makes this point amply clear.

*The ancient Indian, concept of *Samavāya* relation may be brought is as a parallel to understand Tagore's point.

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CHAPTER II

Brojendranath's Aesthetics

DR. BROJENDRANATH Seal was a contemporary of Rabindranath Tagore, whose aesthetic ideas we have discussed in Chapter I. Brojendranath offered constructive criticism of Tagore's literature which Rabindranath valued a great deal. The poet asked the philosopher to preside over the inaugural ceremony of Viśvabhāratī as he considered Dr. Seal to be eminently suited for the purpose. Rabindranath's tribute¹ in verse to Dr. Seal is worth quoting:

Pilgrim, the highest peaks of knowledge, hard to climb you
have scaled,
There on imagination's canvas, in diverse tints and colours
Is painted the invitation of Eternal Beauty;
The radiance white from there, garland of glory that is
The goodness of Wisdom's caressing hand, plays round your
noble brow.

Thus while felicitating Dr. Seal, Tagore has in mind a double image of the philosopher—an image resplendent with the glory of a seeker after truth and another in quest of the Eternal Beauty. Thus Tagore admirably refers to Dr. Seal both as a thinker and as a poet. In the pages to follow we will try to analyse Dr. Seal's aesthetic ideas in the context of his "synoptic view of things" and ascertain his position as a poet of the Quest Eternal. That would give us a complete picture of Dr. Seal both as a creator and as a critic.

His General Scheme

Dr. Seal though an individual scheme of Life, an individual outlook on the universal to be the norm of poetry. This was consistent with his concept of art as the criticism of life and his preference for the whole,—the *bhuma* of the Upaniṣadic

texts. His idea of the whole was also inspired by the Aristotelian idea of the 'beginning middle and end' theory. His craze for the totality was amply reflected in his postulation of an "individual scheme of life", when he wrote:

No doubt, all emotions are proper plastic stuff for constructions in aesthetics as well as ethics; but as building material, experience, in all its forms, is intrinsically valuable—ideation, imagination, instinct, no less than emotion. But none of these enter into the norm. What does enter into the norm and test of poetry is not emotional exaltation, imaginative transfiguration or disinterested criticism but in and through them all the creation of a personality with an individual scheme of life, an individual outlook on the universe.

The critic and the poet in Dr. Seal combined to give us a unique individuality, that is the content of all art-work. According to Bosanquet, this craze for unique individuality is innate in every individual and Dr. Seal tells us that this individuality of every artist is transfigured into the individuality of the art-work. All art-creations have their distinct personality. Rabindranath's *Karna* is his own *Karna* different from the *Karna* of the *Mahābhārata*. The test of *Karna* as an artistic creation does not lie in his approximation to the grand epic character, so well known to the student of Indology but in his being an individual personality, having a character of his own. So do Tagore's *Camelia*, Shelley's *Skylark* and Keats' *Naughty Boy* enjoy a type of individuality peculiar to every one of them. And this peculiar individuality of the art-work is the impress of the human individuality, so rich and varied in Dr. Seal and yet so very unified. If we care to look into Dr. Seal's general scheme as enunciated in his magnum opus,² we will appreciate the truth of the observations made above.

Dr. Seal's general scheme comprised (1) history, which viewed experience in relation to Time (Space-Time) and Time-order in Time; (2) abstracted from Time and Time-Order and viewed only in *Specie Eternitatis*, we have Science and Philosophy, the former ascending from the particular to the general

in order to re-embody the general in the particular and the latter descending from the general to the particular in order to comprehend the particular in the generality; and (3) Art and Religion, the former resulting when our practical activity has aesthetic satisfaction (or *Rasa*) in view, and the latter when we have religious satisfaction in view which is essentially or ultimately a mystical experience. Art was looked upon by Dr. Seal as the friction and practical consummation of experience. So far Dr. Seal, the differentia between art and craft was this *ānanda* and herein he agreed with the Tagores, i.e. Rabin-dranath and Abanindranath. Dr. Seal, while working out this differentia follows the traditional Indian thinking on *rasa*. He tells us that *rasa* or the aesthetic sentiment or the aesthetic enjoyment is the characteristic element of art. This sentiment as sentiment is the same in different arts and not marked off by distinctive psychological characters. The "aesthetic sentiment" then, is the same in different arts but the latter are marked off from one another by the medium in which they worked. Representations, symbols, conventions constitute such a medium in every such art. But in the plastic arts only objective aspects* of Experience are directly represented. Experience, however, on the subjective side may be represented directly but only symbolically.

It is the objective medium through which the *rasa* is excited that distinguishes an art and constitutes in what it is and not the essence of the *rasa* itself which, as *rasa*, is psychologically the same in all the arts. The three plastic arts—architecture, sculpture, and painting—are distinguished from one another by the number of dimensions of the medium in which they work. Architecture works in all the three dimensions fully and freely so as to form an all-sided representation of any given situation. Sculpture works in three dimensions, but with a limited field and circumscribed space and time in each direction. Painting works in two dimensions and achieves its purpose with the help of perspective, when so desired.

*This distinguishing of the subjective and objective aspects of experience hardly bears psychological examination. This distinction is not maintainable from the standpoint of modern psychology.

But radically different from these plastic arts is the art of music which marks no objective aspect of the imagination but excites the evolution directly and not symbolically. Here ideas and representations are only indirect aids and nothing more. The objective medium is constituted by air-waves (Vibrations, rhythms). And whether in the form of melody or of harmony, mathematical proportions furnish the objective basis. It is interesting to note here that there is another sphere of rhythm which is entirely without any implication of sound or air waves, viz., mathematical rhythm which the mathematician perceives in the evolution of pure mathematics, a rhythm which perhaps, is what may have been symbolised in the music of the spheres.

Coming now to the final art—the art of arts,—poetry, it is distinguished by the fact that it excites the *rasas* (or the aesthetic sentiment) directly by means of language, movement and visual imagination working either separately or jointly. Its advantage is that it can bring the other arts (plastic as well as vocal) to its aid so as to give rise to composite forms of art.

Finally Dr. Seal tells us that it may be noted that various composite types of art now being experimented upon, in which plastic, vocal, and visual experiences are sought to be fused or thrown together as in a medley, e.g. Imagism, Scintillism, Cubism, Naturalism (with the ugly and the nude as motives of art) and so on, and there is no end to such experiments.

But these experiments in the accident are yet radically marked off from the domain of Eastern art such as the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Hindu. Taking Hindu art, for example, it is not here to say that Hindu painting paints the Soul. This no art can do and this would not be art, if attempted, but the distinctive feature is that it does not copy a model objectively presented to the artist but seems to image forth in the mind's eye an objective conceived by *Dhyāna* and subsequently embodied in some sense-medium.

Another characteristic feature of Hindu Art is that the artist seeks individual expression only within the limits furnished by the type or model conceived by the Master artist (or by tradition) to whom (or to which) he attaches himself. . . . In the

same way, the Chinese and the Japanese masters display their individuality within the limits furnished by the types or traditions to which they attach themselves and the individual element in art works more felicitously by working within the limits of the central type.

In the study of Dr. Seal's view of aesthetics, it is essential to note that there are three typical and radically divergent views of Art (as noted by Dr. Seal).

1. The aesthetic values or satisfactions are *finite values* viewing Reality as temporal experience which cannot testify to any ultimate and immutable ground.
2. The aesthetic values or satisfactions (*rasa*) are emergent, being manifestations in time of an *ideal* ground which is infinite or timeless (or eternal).
3. The aesthetic satisfactions (or *rasa*) testify to an unique reality which may be termed the *momentary infinite*, a sort of exaltation in which the experience of a moment is transfigured so as to assume an infinite value. In this respect Dr. Seal comes close to the traditional Indian concept of the identity of the aesthetic joy with the Absolute Reality, *Ras Vai Sah*, and thereby he discloses a close affinity with Rabindranath's ideas in point. The unique reality of the art-work is hard to define and as such Rabindranath characterised its essence as *māyā*. We have explained earlier that this idea of *māyā* does not suggest illusion but lacks in ultimacy. This point we have already explained and that is why perhaps Dr. Seal uses the expression unique reality. Reality is there but it is unique and hence indefinable.

In his (Autobiography) Dr. Seal tells us of religion as the worship of a universal principle and marks out its different subdivisions.³ Under the supra-personal he speaks of the momentary Infinite, i.e. the Infinite realised in a moment's experience and this is presumably the aesthetic experience. Thus Dr. Seal makes out a case for our serious consideration in identifying the religion and the aesthetic in a particular context. Aesthetic satisfaction and religious satisfaction may have a thin partition

in between them, having much of identity and resemblance. This view of Dr. Seal is in conformity with the traditional Indian thinking on aesthetics. His reference on art and other forms of human activity to a "mas-consciousness" and "race-consciousness" again makes it clear that he considered like Aurobindo, these forms of spiritual activity to be over-lapping and supplementing one another. We may, by way of reference, speak of art as a language-unit. It has meaning-reference which goes beyond either the primary meaning or the secondary meaning or *vyanjanā*. Thus the language of art-symbol refers to a whole world which includes meaning-references to values which are considered so disparate and different conventionally. This not only holds good of the artist's appreciation, it is equally true of the world of the critic or the appreciator. This idea of Dr. Seal is corroborated by such modern neo-Freudians like Eric Frome and was supported by such ancient scholars of Indian linguistics as Bhartṛhari. So we may note that Bhartṛhari's *Akhandapaśa* advocator that like an art-work the sentence is also a gestalt. This ancient theory of Bhartṛhari may be considered a welcome correction to the prevailing tendency among some modern-linguists to lay undue stress on words. Ānandavardhana took the cue from Bhartṛhari and developed his theory of *vyanjanā* or suggestion. Under the term *artha* or meaning he included not only the cognition, logical meaning but also the emotive elements and the social-cultural significance of utterances which are suggested with the help of contextual factors. The logicians and the philosophers may be satisfied with that portion of the total meaning of an utterance which is precise and accurate and which can be objectively studied, but the poets—and also the linguists—cannot neglect vast areas of language behaviour as unreal or undesirable. Ānandavardhana lays great stress on the suggestive element in poetry and advocates the Dhvani theory, which is *vyanjanā* or suggestion applied to poetry. This *vyanjanā* suggests an extension of the original meaning and it relates to the fundamental problem of interrelating facts, speech and thought with their vast hinterlands. Dr. Seal in fact got them correlated in an aesthetic context by the postulation of mass consciousness, race consciousness, and time consciousness³ thereby

implying that in the art-activity facts, speech and thought as understood in the aesthetic context get fused together and their disparateness disappears when they are touched upon by the magic of the artist's imagination. This concept of race-consciousness as explained by Brojendranath, in a way, comes close to Aurobindo's idea of nation soul. Let us quote Aurobindo in point.

The primal law and purpose of a society, community or nation is to seek its own self-fulfilment; it strives rightly to find itself, to become aware within itself of the law and power of its own being and to fulfil it as perfectly as possible to realise all its potentialities to live its own self-revealing life. The reason is the same; for this too is a being, a living power of the eternal Truth, a self-manifestation of the cosmic spirit and it is there to express and fulfil in its own way and to the degree of its capacities the special truth and power and meaning of the cosmic spirit that is with it. The nation or society, like the individual, has a body an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist. According to Aurobindo, it essentially is a soul rather than has one; it is a great soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctness must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life.⁴

This concept of race-consciousness or national—soul goes a long way in explaining universality in art. Art, as communication could be, well explained with this idea of nation-soul or race-consciousness. This concept again stresses the importance of the study of the history of art and art in its own environment, i.e. empirical study of art.

According to a contemporary⁵ of Dr. Seal, his marriage with Indumati Rakshit in 1884 appeared to have influenced Dr. Seal's early studies, which in turn gave a twist to Dr. Seal's meantal growth. She was reported to be well-read in Egnlish poetry,

familiar with the poems of Shelley, Wordsworth and Keats and probably with the early poems of Rabindranath. Her taste for literature is reported to have worked in Dr. Seal helped mould his literary taste to some extent. She died in 1900. It may be a mere coincidence that Brojendranath's studies, *New Essays in criticism* in which he applies Hegel's philosophy of art to the study of new romantic movement in literature and Keat's *Mind and Art*, were published between 1883 to 1903. What we saw or found in his study of Keats was repudiated in his *New Romantic Movement in Literature* in so far as the Hegelian methodology was concerned. To disown the master whom one had worshipped once is just a tenet in the repudiation of traditions. It is rightly said that the heir to Wagner's tradition would trample Wagner underfoot. It speaks of man's craze for individuality being reflected in his art-creations. Any resemblance to what had gone before is a pointer to the denial of individual character of the art-work and no artist worth the name could accept such a position. That is the secret of syncretism in art and in a sense all art-works are syncrete in character for they subsume all that went before it and gave them all a new habitation, and a name. According to us, this intense desire to create the individual peculiar to the artist and to the individual in Dr. Seal, led the philosopher to disown his early master although he was not slow or reluctant to recognise the greatness of Hegel as a philosopher of fine arts. In his *Autobiography* Dr. Seal writes about his change of faith in no uncertain terms: "My *New Essays in Criticism* gave some indication of this change of faith and my truancy was completed in 1906. In fact, I gave up the linear view of evolution which had been formulated by Hegel". The truth is that progress or evolution of civilisation is multilinear and not unilinear. It is what may be called a ramifying history and any historic chart proper will show that civilisations cross and inter-cross with civilisations and the lines may proceed either downwards or upwards from the point of convergence. The Hegelian view may be termed the linear view of culture history and on this view there is only one such line, of which different points are succinctly marked by different races and civilisations. But Dr. Seal found this to be a capital error and

missing the pluralism of history. In Dr. Seal's earlier view of art and its multifarious types, he had no clear perception of this fact. Besides, he failed to perceive that this issue was not all. The fundamental fact so often missed is that each great culture history had a course of its own with successive stages, primary, tertiary and so on. Moreover, the course of development was not uniform as systematists often imagined—though, no doubt, it must be urged that the philosophical student of History will trace the outline of a general evolution in a scientific survey. All this was hidden from Dr. Seal (till he wrote the *Autobiography*) in the fervour of his early Hegelianism. In that early stages, he was not realist enough to recognise the variety and multiformity of art-ideals and art-motifs.

In looking back on Dr. Seal's mental history and contemplating the story of his successive single interests and passions we may notice that the order of development was from the more general to the less general and from the more abstract to the less abstract, the order being

(i) Mathematics

(ii) Logic

(iii) Philosophy and Psychology

(iv) Literature and Art

It will be seen that subsequently in turning over to the concrete and the special, Dr. Seal proceeded from the less concrete to the more concrete and from the less complex to the complex.

But in his exuberance to disown Hegel, he made certain observations which perhaps did not bear the test of logical scrutiny. Young Dr. Seal was sometimes not free from making very rash predictions; an example taken from the New Romantic Movement in Literature will illustrate our point:

It here may be noted, en passant, that the forms and symbols of Fluxional mathematics, completely and systematically applied to the logic of development (or phenomenally speaking, to the law of Evolution) will render it possible to treat mathematically of history, which is the material or applied logic of development. No one can doubt, after what has been done in the department of natural science in the

way of reducing nature to a system of mathematical relations, that ultimately, history is susceptible to a like treatment, with the aid of statistics, scientific generalisations and philosophic ground principles. It will be then possible, to represent, not only the entire movement of history, but also the history of particular movements, as, for example, the history of literary art, or the subject of this paper by the aid of continuous curves and the general forms of mathematical fluxion.⁶

History, Art, and Literature

It is an example of a confident assertion of predictability of the courses of historical development. The historians of the present generation hold very strong views that history is not an objective and therefore predictable science. Predictability of history, as has been pointed out by Dr. Seal, depends largely upon some philosophic ground principles which imply predetermination and negation of emergent values. An absolute faith in the dictum that history repeats itself is born of such a position, which is absolutely unacceptable to a modern mind. If "causality is taken to be a historical principle as well, it is difficult to see how predictability" could be linked up with the unforeseeable future. What is to happen hundred years hence is difficult to predict as the conditions obtaining therein are anybody's guess. Even the philosophic ground principles, the principal determinants are hard to determine and if they are themselves indeterminable, the determinate character of history becomes a myth. However, before we actually note Dr. Seal's further deviations from Hegel, we will do well to note how Hegelian influence worked on him in matters of aesthetic evaluations. We may refer to Dr. Seal's *Autobiography* for a correct appraisal of the position he held before he abjured the Hegelian position. His views vis-a-vis art as the criticism of life, his reference to different art-patterns as found in the course of art-history of the world, his idea of finality in matters of the evolution of art are worth noting. Dr. Seal thus notes the relation of art (literature) to life.

Literature (its relation to life) is twofold: (1) as the representation (not presentation of life) and (2) as the unfold-

ment of the meaning of life (in other words, its interpretation). Besides, it may be incidentally noted that there are other types of literary art, viz., those that are subsumed under post impressionism. Criticism is often vitiated by its ignoring the fundamental differences in aim and method between the above types of literary art. It must be carefully noted that the mere presentation of life for its raw material, as distinguished from its representation or its interpretation of meaning, is not art.

But though art as the expression of life must be as broad as life itself, it is unfortunate that the world has been dominated by the Greek concept of art which though supreme in its own way and exquisitely finished in form and meaning, has notional and even insular limitations of its own. The Greek Pantheon, which is so human and has two characteristic human proto-types in Hercules (the unconquerable redeemed in his strength) and Psyche (redemptive love), is undoubtedly, matchless in form and type, but it is defective and even rudimentary in its expression and symbolisation of nature and super-nature. Contrast with this the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Indian and other culture types. To describe these in merely general terms:

(1) the vast, the massive, the terrible or the grotesque in early Egyptian Art, with its sphynxes, its half-man, half-beast deities, its triad (Osiris, Isis, Horus,) and finally its prototype of the Sun god in Amenophis, the first Exemplar of man-in-God and God-in-man;

(2) the asymmetrical and non-natural (but powerful and mysterious) in Babylonian Art (early middle and late) down to the new developments codified by Hannurabbi,—or

(3) the typical Hindu murties, symbolical forms which manifest themselves to the devotee in meditation (*dhyāna*); such as the dancing Shiva (Natrāja), the Indian Buddha (not the Greek) or Vishnu and his Consort or the divine figure of Saraswatī; these being revealed to the artist in *dhyāna* (*meditation*) and not drawn as in the West after an objective model, which from the oriental point of view, would at once degrade them to the level of artifacts, or again,

(4) the Negro type with its peculiar physiognomy and its

symbolic music and dance, its drumming and its signalling by flashes of light for communication of news from one corner of Africa to the other.

There may be instances of a few characteristic specimens of the wealth of non-Greek human types, which only prejudice can ignore in any comprehensive classification of art-types and art-systems. But all that can be conceded to Greek sculpture is that it executes its own representative idea and image with a Perfection which neither the Egyptian nor Babylonian could achieve in his own respective world of art. But Hindu paintings and Chinese architecture exhibit the same superb mastery as Greek sculpture. To the Greek aesthetic sense, all non-Greek types are uncouth and monstrous, if not ugly.

But it is idle to claim that there can be any finality in Art. Robin, for example, creates new types of humanity including the commonplace and the ugly and makes these last as proud denizens of the world of art as the classic or neo-classic types.

Such were Dr. Seal's early views of literature and literary art and he brought them into line with his general philosophical outlook which by that time was markedly Hegelian. But years afterwards (*Circa* 1905), he abandoned his Hegelian position.⁷ Before we note this departure, we will do well to note Dr. Seal's position, which is essentially Hegelian in character, when he enunciates and expounds the Keatsian aesthetics. It was Dr. Seal's considered opinion that in choosing Hyperion as his hero, instead of Saturn, Keats was no doubt partly influenced by the thought of doing for the mythology of the Sun what he had already done for that of the Moon, but strong as was his feeling for the magic of Nature or what may be called his elemental affinity,—the main reason seems to have been that Apollo, the protagonist of Hyperion, was, as the father of all verse, the fittest representative of that more subjective, that more human order of deities, whose triumph Keats was to celebrate in his poem. A sound instinct therefore made him avoid the usurpation of the Red-armed Thunderer for his epic theme and choose the later rise of Apollo as the point round which to concentrate the conflict of the Titanic and the anthropomorphic deities. As

for the title of the Epic, *Hyperion* has a poetic suggestiveness and resonance wanting in the latter-day Apollo, and for the rest, Keats seems to have been animated by the spirit of the criticisms, that makes Satan the hero of *Paradise lost* instead of Adam or the Messiah. Dr. Seal further goes on to tell us that this treatment of the classical mythology was original, indeed, a startling revelation, so far as England was concerned. But the "Keynote" struck so independently by Keats had been recognised in German since the days of Winekelmann; and Hegel, in his broad business survey of mythology and art, had incorporated it into the dialectical system of philosophy. Thus it was left to Keats, the sensuous poet to be, in virtue of a clairvoyant imagination, the pioneer in England of a new philosophy, the philosophy of mythology, a triumph, the like of which few professed intellectualists boast of. We will presently see (following Dr. Seal) in course of analysing Keats' mind and art the formative mental forces at work in the earlier version of *Hyperion*. An intellectual reaction against the high romance of the Endymionic vision, the pursuit of knowledge and objective Truth yielding to the ideal of majestic action, the severity of objective art chastening the fervour of the old Idealism, formed the mental mould in which his conception of this Miltonic epic was cast. The speech of Oceanus (*Hyperion*) which is meant to reveal the truth, assigns, Dr. Seal observes,⁸ an objective or historic character to the birth and development of the gods regarded as beings possessed of progressive beauty and might. Elsewhere the subjective or the symbolical significance of these objective stages of deified being is brought out in an unmistakable way, though, of course, the poet does not say, as Hegel would, that they are intermediate stadia in the passage of the human consciousness from the objective to the subjective religion, from Nature to Spirit.

Hegelian Influence : The Triadic Movement

The Hegelian influence on Dr. Seal as bodied forth in Dr. Seal's understanding of Keats' mind as working in triadic movement of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis is worth-noting and

we will do well to refer to Dr. Seal's noted work, *New Essays in criticism*.⁹ He noted in his book that for the last twenty-five years, a critical rehabilitation of his poetic Art and Ideal had been in progress : but even yet a sensuous appetite, a naturalistic yearning for voluptuous enjoyment, was not unoften supposed to have mainly inspired his exuberant imagination. This representation of Keats missed a point of fundamental importance in the study of his mind and art: the supreme fact of his quick and marvellous mental progress and development. Then he goes on to explain the nature of the unconscious (the thesis, i.e. the First phase of the triad) thus :

The healthy spontaneity of the sixteenth century creative art, its luxurious sense of a renovated world, of glorified nature apparelled in the freshness of a dream, a faculty of Wonder and of Admiration like Adam's an omniform Imagination responsive to the plastic sweep and stress of the spirit of beauty in Nature or Man, formed the ground-plan of Keat's mind and art and distinguished him above all other facts of the revolutionary age. His mental development is intelligible as the gradual unfolding or realisation of this, the soul of his art, a soul ever deepening and expanding in humanity.

This understanding and evolution of Keat's mental process may be questioned as in our view Hegel himself never really believed in such a postulation of the triadic movement in the field of aesthetics.

This unconscious (or the sub-conscious to be more precise) as the ground of all artistic activity led some to postulate art-activity as "spontaneous". But a physical analysis of the nature of creative activity will reveal that it is a conscious process of desubjectification and it is discernible in almost all the master pieces of art-work, be it poetry, painting, music, or sculpture. We may quote and compare the observations of Zannas and Auboyer¹⁰ in point, while they discuss the artistic excellence of the Khajuraho temples (because they are relevant for us): "There is no question of spontaneous procreation, which was, in any case, impossible, but rather of a skilful application of

traditional ideas". This conscious endeavour on the part of the artist finds its counterpart in the artists of the neighbouring districts and this participation in a common endeavour may be an unconscious motive or unmotivated motive. But the creative activity is all the same conscious. This common participation has been noted by many an art-critic. To quote Zannas and Auboyer again in the same context referred to above:

Thus the temples of Khajuraho are part of a long chain of development in which they form the most characteristic links. With them the culminating point of architectural beauty is reached, created step by step by the Śilpīn who started off with certain fundamental ideas which, though simple in themselves, attained a massive authority over the centuries. They are an example of the method based, in accordance with the Indian system, on the application of only a small number of architectural formulas which, multiplied indefinitely led to the creation of new styles. It is often easy to go back along the path of their development and discover, step by step, if not the prototype which gave rise to them originally, at least one of the oldest specimens of a particular series.

Thus these fundamental ideas and application of a small number of formulas regarding architectonic made possible the discovery of a common continuing pattern in different art-works belonging to the same time or to different periods of history. They definitely repudiate the "Freudian Unconscious" in art and stress the need for the induction of the conscious and the self-conscious in the sphere of aesthetic activity. Dr. Seal, following Hegel, felt the need of postulating the self-conscious as the opposed moment in the creative process and he discovered, this psychological hypothesis by an examination of Keat's Hyperion.

Picking up the thread of discussion on Keats, we may point out that the Anti-thesis (The Self-Conscious) was thus explained by Dr. Seal:

And the anti-thesis made him perpetually lose his artistic balance and equipoise in one or other of the two opposed directions. First allying itself with the morbidity of his tem-

perament, this habitual self-dissection made him a skilful anatomist of Melancholy, made him a shadow of his soul's day time in the dark void of night. This, more than his congenital consumptive taint or his elusive charman or cleopatra vision, constituted the tragedy of his life. The inward eye exercised a serpent's fascination on him and in hours of reverie he would revel in an orgy of horrors and horrid moods. Secondly, the antithetic element of self-consciousness marred, not merely the quite repose and Elysian enjoyment of his inner mind but also the grand simplicity and spontaneity, the statuesque nudity of his native art. Henceforth he was a votary, not of Art, but of the aesthetic sense, the sense of the luxurious.*

Then Dr. Seal moves up to explain the return of self-consciousness, which confronts the natural spontaneity. He describes the mental crisis of the poet and calls it malady. Dr. Seal notes that Keats's latent ideality, his healthy objectivity of outlook, his supreme prerogative of a creative imagination that sprang from like a sort of Minerva in Panoply, soon awoke into self-consciousness. Then commenced for Keats the mental malady which turned the delights of creation and the fascination of romance into gall and vinegar and his exquisite superfine sensations into morbid and labyrinthine self-torture.¹¹ So on the psychical level, there is a swing to the opposed mental state and the momentum is gathered through a movement to the opposite delight turning into self-trture. Thus a morbidity develops and this morbidity is kaleidoscopic in its change of hue and form; even this constitutional taint, like his poetic genius has an impersonal quality, an omniformity and plasticity, that makes it a proper vehicle of his

*Dr. Seal's idea of the sense of the luxurious may be compared to the concept of surplus in Rabindranath's aesthetics, explained earlier. But we fail to understand how Keats could be a votary of this sense of the luxurious to the execusion of art as they are indistinguishable at the conceptual level. They speak of a supposed distinction without any real difference between them. It becomes evident when we remember that art was nothing more than this sense of the luxurious objectified. So Dr. Seal's observation on Keats in fact does not carry much sense.

creative art.¹² Dr. Seal's reference to this impersonal quality is significant as by the postulation of this impersonal quality he comes close to such neo-idealists like Croce and Gentile who considered art to be subjective feelings desubjectified. Again this concept of impersonal quality or desubjectified subjective feelings helps us postulate the concept of aesthetic universality as enjoyed by the art-works, although they were the responses of an individual mind to its surroundings, both empirical or imaginary. This impersonal quality in Keats, Dr. Seal points out, is a sort of clairvoyance, which, when the subjective malady smites him, enables Keats to perceive, independently of Malthus and Darwin, the darker half of the cosmic process in evolution, its anti-social destructiveness. The same clairvoyant quality of his imagination also revealed to him, in his moods of self-conscious romance and transcendental idealism, the brighter half of the same process, the principle of love adducing loveliness in the universe. This leads to romantic idealism and it was the moment opposed to the earlier. Dr. Seal tells us that a study of *Endymion* will reveal that other element of the poet's mental life, which, like phagocytes in the blood marked off this morbidic ferments. In *Endymion* he is a self-conscious votary of sensation and imagination. His romantic enthusiasm is solely directed to beauty and youthful vision. But his worship of beauty is no mere sense-worship, his love no transfigured appetite, his exquisite sensitiveness no pleasure no purely physical or organic relaxation of the fibres. Indeed in the *Endymion* of Keats no less than in the *Alastor* of Shelley, the pursuit of the vision of beauty has in it the gorgeousness and the high romance of the ideal. So in a way the real or the ideal got fused and their ideality is proclaimed. This ideal was an a-priori for his poetic vision and gave him the much needed sympathetic understanding of nature as one continuum. This helped him develop his idea of love and this religion of love was conceived, in individualistic fashion as a mere apotheosis of egoistic instinct. It is a universal influence.

Music, for Dr. Seal, posed a problem as he found in music nothing but mathematical proportions. Music received a left handed compliment from Dr. Seal in his *Autobiography*.¹³

The plastic and pictorial arts brought to Dr. Seal revelations of a new world but music offered him a stumbling block. The mathematical proportions came home to him; they were only an evolution of mathematical proportions and nothing more. So appreciation of music was not so much dependent on the innate sense of harmony of the appreciation as it was on his acquired sense of proportion. This was training-based and without appropriate training, the appreciation of music was not at all possible. We note here that artists like Abanindranath repeatedly spoke of training and discipline for a proper understanding of fine arts whereas Dr. Seal considered this training to be essential for a proper appreciation of music. He specifically told us that an understanding of Hindu music was impossible without such training of the ear as would enable it to catch the *shrutis*, the twenty-two intervals in which the octave is divided in that music; and *shrutis* imply a finer and more discriminative appreciation of natural gradations than the twelve semi-tones of occidental music.

Dr. Seal found, however, that the usual notion that the Hindus had no idea of harmony at all was not altogether correct. Polyphonic music as intermediate between melody and harmony was of course nothing new to them. But this was not all. They had the elements of harmony as Dr. Seal had shown, in his *Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*.¹⁴ This harmony as evidenced in music and other forms of plastic art was a phenomenon not only of the aesthetic world but of the phenomenal world as well. Love was instrumental in the discovery of this harmony for without love this harmony was not discernible in the empirical world. This hypothesis of love has been regarded as a condition precedent for the proper understanding of the problem of communication in art. This concept of love has a wider meaning in the context of modern aesthetics and it helps empathy or *Einfuehlung* to operate for a proper appreciation of art. That beauty could communicate or express in and through love, even though it was transfigured appetite is evident from contemporary reviews of ancient and modern art-historians. We may, to illustrate our point, refer to the chapter entitled 'Sources of Data' in *Sexual Behaviour in Human Female* (edited

by Kinsey & others). We should specially direct our attention to the section on art-materials, wherein the author tells us how elements contributed to the development of the world's fine arts. Love, in the lower sense, equally fed the fine arts of the world as it involved the ideal love of the Platonic type as its a-priori prius. So strictly, speaking, this higher and lower love was not maintainable. Love, whatever moral appendage we may ascribe to it, is and has been pursuing the vision of beauty, which Dr. Seal discovers in Endymion.

In *Endymion* the poet bodies-forth love pursuing the vision of beauty; and it is remarkable that in treating this theme his imagination should apprehend, however, dimly, the very truth and essence of the matter, the law of the subject. Keat's imagination has in full measure the quality he ascribes to that faculty that in seizing beauty perceives the truth. (Herein a syntactic conception of truth has been sought to be suggested.) A more unmistakable and even more striking instance of his imaginative intuition of deep speculative truth or law will demand full and serious consideration in the story of *Hyperion*. This element of ideality, an imaginative insight into the nature of things, in a word this aesthetic approach to the problem of reality, led Keats to believe that the world of imagination was more real than the so-called world of facts. History was a gilded cheat. In his postulation of this syntactic conception of truth vis-a-vis beauty he was not utterly wanting in human interest; but it was the interest in ideal or romantic humanity and not in the brood of human serpentry such as he would regard the men and women acting on the stage of history that gave the poet his aesthetic vision. In Keats, Dr. Seal discovers action, heroic and emerging; Herculean tasks in the service of humanity and the Shelleyan revolt; but they were lesser glories than love. His ideal was enjoyment, Elysian repose;¹⁵ it was a joy born of an intimate relation with the rest through love and this love would crown us with immortality, only if we follow that beckoning of the ideal . . . But this high-wrought transcendentalism, Dr. Seal tells us, this unearthly glare, this impalpable ether was more than the human soul could bear and accordingly in the fourth book, we have a revulsion from the airy nothing of his immortal

love and a falling back upon the sustaining strength of human affections and yearnings of our elemental affinities and the sweet links that link us to our proper sphere of Earth. A sense of reality was sought to be discovered to sustain the poet¹⁶ after a strenuous flight in the boundless blues of imagination. Love was a handy principle to effect and explain the earth-boundedness.

Endymion's human love was to gain in elements of self-discipline, in penance and purification and then it was to be revealed to him that his human love and the ideal love he was in quest of, were one and the same. Dr. Seal's mind roamed from the abstract to the concrete, from the universal to the particular. That is how he discovered in Keats the antipathy for the airy nothings of immortal love and sought to identify the human love and the ideal love. The confrontation between spontaneity and self-consciousness was dissolved in a particular art-work; every artifact provided an occasion for such a synthesis and this artifact is particular and individual in character, effecting synthesis of many opposed moments and elements. In creating an artifact the imagination works wonders and a face is made out of the moon and a moon out of an ugly face. That is how fine art has been considered to share in the mystic nature of *māyā* thereby implying that it had no ultimacy in its appearance.

Endymion wonders to behold the simple Indian maiden transfigured into Dian's self, the real in the ideal, the ideal in the real. There is an easy passage from one to the other in this world of art and poetry. Then we find Dr. Seal speaking of the third stage in the "Triad of Dialectic Development of Ideas, the Synthesis". It gives us the complete history of a mind, an essay in psycho-genetic criticism.

The process is repeated again and again, in the history of his mind and consequently in his art. Spontaneous life mirroring itself in art and reflective self-consciousness like a Nemesis treading behind and shattering the fair vision—such is the mutual antagonism of the artistic and the introspective mood in Keats. Dr. Seal noted that Keats totally lacked the higher synthesis—the faculty of reconciling the inner vision with creative art or

invention. As it was, his mental progress, though continuous was of the rectilinear rather than of the curvilinear order. But Dr. Seal noted in Keats ample promise of a rich unfolding of a golden harvesting, from the beginning. To quote Dr. Seal in point:

In the spring time of the poet's fancy, going back to the early pre-Endymion days, might be marked human interests of a romantic glow, with an intellectual awakening which first took a critical and analytical turn in his life's midsummer, an epic enthusiasm for action, for heroes and histories;—and in the hectic flush to the autumn, an interest in flesh-colour humanity, quickening into a blood-heat glow of sympathy; a sober sense of the real drama of life, fading away in the end into a pale autumnal pensiveness of thought.¹⁷

In Keats, Brojendranath notes that from subjective intellectual interest of this type he passed on to the true intellectual instinct which finds its satisfaction in the disinterested knowledge of things, of objective modes of being. The poet's understanding first took the colour of his imagination, and truth for him was transferred into beauty. He cannot perceive how truth can be attained by consecutive reasoning, yet must be so, if at all, attained. From this dilemma he strives to extricate himself by propounding that it is the imagination that in intuitively seizing beauty attains truth. To quote Dr. Seal's words in point:

What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be true, whether it existed before or not; for I have the same idea of all our passions as of love, they are all sublime, creation of essential Beauty. The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream, he awoke and found it true.¹⁸

This position of Keats as understood by Dr. Seal has been referred to in a previous chapter and it has been suggested that this position is akin to that of Rabindranath when he identified beauty and truth and in fact put higher premium on formal qualities (as we find in his famous poem "Bhasa O Chanda") although he had occasions to tell us that "content" or what was

to be expressed was of greater significance than form in a work of art. So Tagore's emphasis shifted this shift, we have already explained, was due to the delicate intricacies involved in the complex nature of the problem itself. Dr. Seal also notes this emphasis on formal qualities in Tagore when he tells us that Tagore's literature sometimes lacked that "criticism of life" which was the hall-mark of good literature. But at the same time he suggested in Keats an identity of form and content when he accepts the position that for Keats beauty and truth were identical.

Dr. Seal further notes that he (Keats) could not, after a first flush in *Erydymion*, keep himself in one and the same humour sufficiently long for a monumental work in verse. Unfortunately for his concrete artistic activity, his soul would too swiftly compass the whole gamut of human possibilities, his inner life changed shape and hue too rapidly for artistic finish and fulness of self portratitute. In fact, it was that we have called the anti-thesis that was responsible for this. He would grow self-conscious too early and his spontaneity would forsake him.

So according to Dr. Seal the unconscious and the self-conscious in Keats's mental organisation are the two strands in that rich silken cocoon which work themselves inextricably into the continuous thread of his inner life. His story is full of chrysalis changes, of Protean metamorphoses but these are not confused reflections or miscellaneous shreds of a half-formed, half-luminuous mind-stuff; they constitute an internal dynamic movement governed by a definite law, the law of a passage from one living spontaneity to another through the transitional process of a morbid devitalising self-consciousness. To Keats, let us repeat, spontaneity meant life and freshness, an ampler other, a diviner air; he breathed it, fed on it and rendered it into deathless creations of beauty. Presently, he fails to contemplating his art, and grows self-conscious; and his art withers away as under the gaze of the basilisk. When the poet becomes self-conscious he comes back to himself. If art were desubjectification, it was a process of going out and not one of coming in. The moment, we "come in" we grow self-conscious and the process of desubjectification withers and art fades away; the

mental image gets blurred and then follows the period of blank devitalisation, of suspended animation, from which he looks up into a fresh germinating spontaneity and a new spurt or flush of creativeness. This process is repeated again and again, in the history of his mind and art. Spontaneous life mirroring itself in art and reflective self-consciousness like a Nemesis treating behind and shattering the fair vision—such is the mutual antagonism of the artistic and the introspective mood in Keats. He totally lacked the higher synthesis—the faculty of reconciling the inner vision with creative art or invention. This antagonism was not only true of Keats but it was a psychological truism. The long-drawn controversy as has been referred to in the chapter on Rabindranath as to whether the “mute poets” were poets as well or not may be reconsidered from this viewpoint. The point noted by Dr. Seal in Keats might explain that problem as well. We may suggest that a poet who could desubjectify his mental images into beautiful forms failed to do it and remained a mute poet as his self-consciousness overtook him, and the process of desubjectification was killed in the embryo. The mute poet has his ego-centric predicament too pronounced to allow full time to a process of desubjectification.

Keats's mental progress, Dr. Seal notes, was of a rectilinear rather than of the curvilinear order. However, we may note that in the present context, Dr. Seal uses the words thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in a broad sense and does not make too rigid a use of the Procrustean bed of dialectical forms. But this acceptance and their application to aesthetics were not quite intelligible, as according to us, the type of opposition that makes the dialectical movement possible could not be found in the aesthetic fire. So, to discover the type of antagonism (as thought of by Hegel) working in a Hegelian dialectical movement was not present there in a world of art as the distinct moment, as thought of by Dr. Seal, did not involve the type of antagonism that was necessary to make a dialectical movement possible. So, in a way, Dr. Seal proved himself too submissive a Hegelian when he sought to explain Keats's mental process, his creative activity with the help of the notion of Hegelian dialectics. But this charisma did not work far long and

Dr. Seal was soon disillusioned in his abject surrender to Hegelian thoughts and ideas. In his zealotry to be a true Hegelian he outdid Hegel when we find him try to explain art-activity on the principle of dialectics, i.e. a process of antagonism assuming the character of a full-fledged contradiction. But he was not slow to overcome this morbid surrender to his master and soon he outgrew the Hegelian position. We may note that Dr. Seal's innate dislike for closed systems also helped him to disown Hegel, although (we may suggest) he could never come out fully of the Hegelian orbit.

Repudiation of Hegel

It may be noted that during the period of his writing *New Essays in Criticism*, young Brojendranath in his study of the "New Romantic Movement in Literature" showed no lack of self-confidence in his criticism of Hegel. Dr. Seal accounted for this repudiation of his master in his address¹⁰ to the post-graduate students of the Calcutta University:

You see I have been a seeker after flawless, fullorbed Perfection through-out and in every walk of my life and this my hankering after perfection, after a finished product everywhere and always has baffled me in all my endeavour to accomplish anything worthy of mention. Whenever I have sat down to compose anything I have been haunted by the fear that I may have thereby committed myself to the keeping of some closed system of truth and this is precisely what I am constitutionally incapable of doing.

New Essays in Criticism contains interesting revelations of young Brojendranath's self-assurance in expounding his early master Hegel's "Theory of Art" and pointing out where he began to differ from his master. We shall give below two instances. In the opening page of his preface, Dr. Seal writes:

Hegel's view of historic development as a unilinear series, a position to which his dialectic of the categories commits him, can no longer be maintained. The Egypt-Babylonian, the

Graeco-Italian, the Indo-Sino-Japanese Art series and culture histories, cannot be evolved one from another and are relatively independent in origin as well as in development. In tracing the historic world process, at whatever point we begin, and whether we proceed up or down, the geneological line breaks up more and more into a network of relationship so that the Hegelian conception of a punctual movement in a unilinear series is as obsolete from the standpoint of the philosophy of history and the historic method proper, as the Lamarckian view in the domain of biology.

At the same time, the recognition of the diverse origins and independent developments of the separate culture histories is not inconsistent with the assertion of an immanent world movement in which they all participate, each in its own degree and extent and it is the business of Dialectic to trace the outlines of this cosmic movement to formulate its successive categories or regulative ideas and to work out their rational and systematic filiation, without pretending to anticipate History or seeking to close the vista of the future.

Dr. Seal tells us that the progress of the biological and historical sciences has made it necessary to formulate this more correct philosophical view of development. The diverse historic cultures, arts, religions, philosophies, codes, and race-consciousnesses are not partial phases or aspects of humanity or of the absolute idea; they are the developing whole and express, more or less fully, more or less accurately, the idea of universal humanity, reproducing like the Leibnitzian monad, the entire cosmic movement, each in miniature and each from its own individual place and position in the long scheme of things (p. iv). It was rightly pointed out by Banerjee²⁰ that Dr. Seal's philosophy was an interpretation of culture, comprising science, art, religion, and morality. His philosophic outlook sought a synoptic view of things, its characteristic being comprehensiveness and anthropocentricity.

Where young Brojendranath expressed his deviation from Hegel's theory of linear progress in art his use of metaphysical expressions like 'immanent world movement' and 'reproducing

like Leibnitz's Monads', the entire cosmic movement brought him close to the historicists who said similar things in another way : that each epoch, each society is of equal value and the linear idea of progress is untenable. Later Spengler in his detailed study of historic cultures concluded that each culture, similar to living organism passes through a cycle of growth, maturity and decline uninfluenced by others.

Hegel's Classification of Art

So it is quite clear that Hegel's view of historic development as unilinear did not find favour with Dr. Seal while he wrote his *Nouveaux Essais*.* He sought to supplement Hegel's classification by his own and from his point of view. Oriental and neo-Oriental, classical and neo-classical, romantic and neo-romantic are but categories in the dialectical development of the Art-Idea; categories which apply as much to the Indo-Sino-Japanese art-history as to the European. Hegel's Oriental, classical, and romantic art are accordingly misnomers and his characterisation in each case, more or less narrow and provincial or at least formal and jejune, being strictly limited to the European section and not drawn from a correct and comprehensive survey of the entire field. We may further point out that Hegel's classification is guilty of cross-division as the boundaries of these classes are not so very well established as to exclude over-lapping. Oriental in the accepted sense of the term may be equally classical or romantic. Hegel's imputation of arbitrary meanings of the recognised terms with accepted meanings is also repugnant to a serious student of aesthetics. It was Dr. Seal's considered opinion that art-movement in history entered on a new phase with the advent of Zola, Ibsen and Tolstoi.† He had reasons to believe that in this epoch the scientific or realistic material will at first preponderate as a huge unwieldy mass and the new norm or architectonic, the new art-ideal will only gradually succeed in imposing itself magisterially, as in so-called classicism,

**New Essays in Criticism, Preface p. ii.*

†Tolstoi might have inspired Dr. Seal to invest art with purpose foreign to the nature of art as art.

on the superabundant matter and this will be followed by a corresponding romanticism of the new ideal. We may note here that Dr. Seal's interpolation of neo-oriental neo-classical and neo-romantic could hardly improve matters as the very basis of this Hegelian classification was defective. Hegel knew of Indian art, for example, to be grotesque and bizarre. With this kind of ignorance, no art-classification could even claim a semblance of veracity. Dr. Seal also showed complete ignorance of the gems of Bengali literature when he classed "Udbharānta Préma" as the finest specimen of Bengali-literature. Thus Dr. Seal's classification could be considered over-lapping and he could be accused of cross division.

While studying Dr. Seal's later writings on aesthetic one has to note his still wider divergence from Hegel. The dialectical process was conceived by Hegel as a movement from aspect to aspect, from moment to moment, until it was completed in the Absolute Idea or the Absolute whole. The law of Evolution was similarly taken to simplify a differentiation of parts, of organs and functions, which go on developing each in its own line until they are reintegrated in a coherent whole. Both these conceptions, Dr. Seal thought, required a radical correction. The real is always a whole; the abstraction of phases, aspects, moments is unhistorical; and organs and functions evolve, never independently but always as participating in and dominated by the life of the organism as a whole. The earlier stages were as real and concrete as the later ones. His idea of coherent whole as the matrix of all contraries and contradictions has been shared by many a modern critic and their resemblance or approximation in similar thinking is not a peculiar phenomenon in the history of aesthetics. The historico-comparative method reveals such resemblances; they might look paradoxical at times. Engelberg, for example, while discussing the aesthetics of Yeats speaks in the same vein as Dr. Seal. His thesis runs on the same lines. In *The Vast Design: Patterns in W. B. Yeats's Aesthetics*. Engelberg has endeavoured to arrange them in intelligible patterns which obey the Yeatsian laws of the contraries, seeing Yeats's whole art as a long exercise in trying to eat his cake and keep it too, an attempt to achieve what might be defined in Auden's

word, as a poetry which is the clear expression of mixed feelings. In his first chapter, on first principles, Engelberg shows how Yeats was attracted by opposite ideals and determined to preserve them both—the grandeur and vastness mainly associated with the epic as well as the passion and intensity mainly associated with the lyric. Western Renaissance individualism and the cult of personality as well as Eastern serenity and vague immensities. Thus Dr. Seal's idea of a synoptic view finds its echo in Engelberg and the latter puts up an unwitting support for Dr. Seal. Quite consistent to his adherence to the idea of a synoptic whole, Dr. Seal wrote that antithesis, as a mere negation (as conceived by Hegel) was a logical fiction. The organic whole developed and passed from a relatively less stable to a relatively more stable equilibrium and the balance of powers, which maintained the whole life, corrected undue emphasis in the one direction by developing a counter emphasis in a complementary (not opposed) direction. Dr. Seal readily agreed with McTaggart, a Hegelian, when Dr. McTaggart considered that Hegel in the later categories, more or less discarded the antithesis as an abstract negation.

But it must be said that Dr. Seal's aesthetics had its roots in Hegel and he himself made it amply clear while he discussed the role of critics since Hegel. Philosophical critics since Hegel, Dr. Seal writes, have either been content with diversifying and amplifying the materials that are illustrative of Hegel's classification of art, or what is very rare, have followed tracks of their own, thus losing the advantage of building on a solid foundation already laid. Ulrici, Lotze, Michelet, among philosophers, Barante and Sainte-Beuve, and Quinet, Gervinus and Taine among the historians of literature, Baur* and Schlosser among the writers on Staatswissenschaft and political history (all of whom Dr. Seal referred to) dealt in the spirit of comprehensive thought with theories and type of art. Dr. Seal thinks that Michelet's relation to Hegel was that of a disciple

*Otto Bauer: His noted works are: *Die Nationalitätenfrage Und die Sozialdemokratie* (1908); *Die Teuerung* (1911); *Balkankrieg Und Deutsche Weltpolitik* (1912) etc.

and commentator. He considers Lotze to be at his weakest in aesthetics. According to Dr. Seal Ulrich was more "possible" in his theory of art than in his doctrine of religion but the best event of his theory of art and art criticism was the stress he laid on the central or regulative idea in his analysis of products of art and that was Hegel diluted down to Ulrich. Bauer and Sainte-Bauve, Schlosser and Gervinus gave us either fragmentary theories and generalisations or admirable galleries of portraits unmatched for brilliance and historic verisimilitude. It was Dr. Seal's considered opinion that young among post-Hegelians, Taine alone fashioned a new theory on aesthetics and contributed elements of permanent value which fairly supplemented and corrected the Hegelian doctrine.

However, it may be safely said that the historic classification of art begun by Lessing Winckelmann and systematised by Hegel had some abiding influence on the thoughts of Dr. Seal, as is evident from his own words; "in respect of historic genesis and comprehensive classification, in the department of aesthetics, Hegel must remain the ground-plan for all future superstructures".

Nonetheless Dr. Seal was critical of Hegel's postulation of the three constituent factors in art. Dr. Seal writes, of every artistic product—the idea, the symbol or matter and the representation or reflection—it is important to bear in mind that it is the character of the last which alone determines the type of art. It follows that the idea and the symbolical material may vary and yet so long as the relation between the two or what is the same, the character of the representation of the former by the latter, does not change, the type of art will remain the same. On this view it is easy to understand how different arts, like poetry and painting, operating upon different material, may belong to the same type, such as the classical or the romantic. Within the domain of literary art, the same observation holds good. The epic, dramatic, and lyrical varieties are broadly distinguished in matter as well as in form, but this distinction of representative material is incompatible with their belonging to the same type of art. Again, Dr. Seal points out, taking individual differences among poetic creations, the Hell of Dante

with its realistic hard-featured outlines, differs in embodiment and configuration from the ideal shadows and supernatural horrors of Milton's bottomless abyss, but there is no difficulty in classing them together as products of romantic art. Similarly, the other element, the idea may vary widely without correspondent variations in the type of art. With these critical notes on Hegel Dr. Seal drew some conclusions which considerably modified and enlarged the Hegelian theory on fine arts.* To quote Dr. Seal:

It is idle therefore to say, as Hegel says, that the romantic type (re: his oriental-classical-romantic classification) is final and that Art, as a historic movement, culminates, after the romantic type in religion and philosophy. Taine's conception is true. Art, instead of passing over into and being consummated in philosophy, run in parallel lines with the latter and is destined to new developments, along with the movement of speculation and with changes in the social environment.

In rejecting this claim of finality, we touch upon one of the weak points of the Hegelian philosophy. Critics from Schelling and Weisse downwards, have pointed out that the dialectical development of the absolute idea as traced by Hegel in his logic, fails to reproduce itself in nature or history. It is impossible, indeed, that it should do so; only a fundamental misconception of the nature of the dialectical method, for which Hegel must be held in some measure responsible, could have led to such an idle expectation. We may note here that the dialectical method (it is essential to understand) is only a method of condensation, of systematisation, of rational explanation and not a method of discovery. The dialectical method, enables us to follow, and not to anticipate, the process of things, or the movement of history. Given being and non-being, by no abstract process of logical synthesis whatsoever, could we

*For a detailed study of Hegelian aesthetics, See Hegel's *Philosophy of Fine Arts* and A. Kuox's *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer*.

develop the notion of becoming,—nor when quality and quantity are given, can the same process, as by a creative fiat, usher into existence the notion of measures. In fact, it is not the abstract operation of logical understanding that annihilates the contradiction between thesis and antithesis, being and non-being, in a richer synthesis; it is the concrete movement of reality, the process of things, that resolves the contradiction and the dialectical method is simply a statement, in term of the understanding, of this real process and movement.

Other Influence: Comte

The transition which took place in Brojendranath's philosophical outlook (vis-a-vis Hegelian outlook) may be attributed partly to the influence of Comte who at one time had a good following in Bengal, which included Brojendranath's father, Mohendranath Seal. Comte's positive philosophy was based upon the following:

1. A rigorous adoption of positive or scientific method. (It has been rightly pointed out by Professor Priyada Ranjan Ray²² that Dr. Seal is possibly the first Indian scholar to furnish evidence about the positive method followed by the Indian philosophers in their formulation of concepts and investigation of physical phenomena. In his book *The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus* Dr. Seal has thus provided us with materials for an account of the contribution made by the early Indian philosophers towards the growth of science in that period; for as Dr. Seal has put it "philosophy in its rise and development is necessarily governed by the body of positive knowledge preceding or accompanying it". The method of Dr. Seal as discussed in the following pages be looked upon as good specimens of scientific method as laid down by Comte.)
2. His law of three stages of intellectual development.
3. A classification of sciences.
4. The concept of special and incomplete philosophy of each of the sciences anterior to sociology.

5. Synthesis of the positivist social philosophy which completes, clarifies and unifies all the lesser and subordinate philosophies (cf. Dr. Seal's idea of synthetic philosophy).

In this context we may recall what Saroj Kumar Das wrote²³ saying that during his last days Dr. Seal had confided to him that "he (Dr. Seal) had been acquiring a mastery over the different sciences physical (or physico-chemical), biological, psycho-sociological, as a prelude to and preparation for a metaphysical synthesis, to reserve the last few years of his life . . . for the eventual publication of his system of philosophy. So we may suggest that it was Comte's influence on Dr. Seal that might have helped him overcome the influence of Hegel, his early master to a certain extent.

Again, Dr. Seal, in his ceaseless endeavour to discover the central core of religion betrays the Comtian influence in a big way when he wanted to vindicate the-then developments in religion which sought to dispense with the idea of God. But this was a passing phase as well. The ever-expanding mental horizon in Dr. Seal left out Comte's positivistic humanism with its worship of the Grand Etra and Babism with its offshoot Bahaism, the religion of brotherhood. We note him examining the new concepts of religion without God such as that of Julian Huxley. This religious consciousness was a part of the total human consciousness which included among others the aesthetic and the social consciousness. To quote his words: "But the religious expression is not the only expression of the ultimate experience. We have also science, philosophy, or (better) scientific philosophy, art or the aesthetic sensibility, *rasa* (sentiment) or *rasānubhūti* or again mystical experience, all these being phases of humanism". In his idea of humanism, the individual personality tended to grow more and more multipersonal. Dr. Seal told us that history had many centres and the future man, an epitome of world history and civilisation, must have a poly-centric personality: but the centre of centres in him is beyond them all. That centre lies in his experience of communion with the whole or the Absolute in *Samādhi*. However, in this process, the idea of mass consciousness will

be the first stage, wherein everything in life and art will be evaluated in terms of the mass life. In other words, the needs of the masses and not of the individual, will be the primary and guiding concept and measure of value. (We may favourably compare this idea of Dr. Seal with that of Romain Rollands' idea of "People's Theatre" wherein he seems to develop this idea of community-based dramatic themes, which only spoke of the conflict of elemental forces in nature, consciously avoiding all reference to human conflicts which tended to disunite human societies.) In the next stage, this will develop into the concept of the community consciousness, wherein the life of the community will be the guiding principle of all life constructions. This community consciousness is the consciousness of a more organised body than the masses. The next stage in this development will be the concept of race-consciousness, in other words the idea of the race as the centre of all values and organic constructions. The final step will be reached when all these elements will be synthesised and concretised in the concept of the age (and the march of ages) as embracing the whole field of life. "This", according to Dr. Seal, "will transform the entire panorama of life and art, bringing in a transvaluation of all values and elevating Art to new heights and undreamt of altitudes".

His Methodology

We have thus a glimpse of the synoptic view of Dr. Seal embracing the entire panorama of thought and reality and his methodology to formulate this synoptic view was rightly acclaimed as a contribution to contemporary thinking by Radhakamal Mukherjee²⁴ contemporary of Dr. Seal, in the following words:

The second lasting contribution of Seal's thought, "was his development of a methodology for the comparative sociology of religion. His historico-comparative study of Vaishnavism and christianity is the most original work that goes far beyond the European science of religion, whether the schools of Spencer,

Tylor and Lang or the German schools, Seal advocates a comparative historical study of the speculative conception of the God-head and the socio-ethical or practical attitude of religion blended together in the context of the world view of the culture and of the relations of man, society and cosmos. Comparative history of religion in the West more or less overlooks the practical socio-ethical aspect of religion which is organically, if not also logically, related to the speculative element.

This methodology, as referred to by Mukherjee, was co-centric with Dr. Seal's historico-comparative method as he enunciated it in his *Comparative Studies in Vaishnavism and Christianity*.²⁵ Dr. Seal's first concern was to distinguish between genuine scientific methods from pseudo-scientific methods.

In the first place, the comparative method of investigating the sciences relating to the history of the human mind required elucidation or correction, for nothing had done greater mischief in this department of research than the ill-conceived and blundering attempts of so many tyrods and "prentice hands" to build ambitious theories and comprehensive systems on the shifting quicksands of loose analogy and vague generalisation in the name of scientific method. Again historical comparison, such as is here proposed by Dr. Seal implied that the objects compared are of co-ordinate rank and belong more or less to the same stage in the development of human culture. Dr. Seal pointed out that it had long been observed that the key to the investigation of the physical, the biological, and the psychological sciences was not of much avail for the infinitely more complex and varied phenomena of the sociological group. An organon, more fruitful than the Aristotelian or the so-called Baconian one, had been devised to grapple with the problem in its complexity. Even as transcendental analysis, the calculus of infinitesimals, of variations, and of quaternions ought to have superseded the primitive algebraical analysis, in the investigation of physical phenomena in their subtlest manifestations, and as world-forming agencies; so that historic method, the comparative method and finally the formula of evolution, must banish the primitive analysis and synthesis, the primitive deduction and

induction, in the study of the sociological organism whether in its statical or dynamical aspects. Dr. Seal considered this "historicity" to be of great value and what was most important for him was that the historic method with the powerful help of evolution, had made it abundantly clear that the human sciences ought to have been roughly historical in character, that every dogma, institution or tradition, every code, language, myth or system, had had its history—its origin, growth, and development—a study of which was essential to a proper understanding of its function in society, its place and meaning, and worth. Universal culture therefore, in the abstract, has had a history; and a comparison and collation of the several culture-histories, in which this has been more or less imperfectly, more or less meagrely, embodied or mirrored, is essential, if we want to lay the foundation of a true philosophy of history and to rise to a vision of the absolute humanity, the true logos of God, to which universal history testifies as its only authentic scripture and gospel. This is the new corrected, extended historic method which, in consonance with the formula of evolution rightly understood and in co-operation with the comparative method properly qualified, will serve as the organon of the human or sociological sciences. This is the genuine historical method, Dr. Seal tells us, that will solve the sphinx's riddles of comparative jurisprudence, politics, religion, mythology, and sciences which in the days of Dr. Seal were brought to a standstill. And finally this is the method that will found the science of comparative philosophy, most sovereign of the sciences of a sociological group. Incidentally we may fall back again on Dr. Seal's *Positive Sciences or the Ancient Hindus* wherein he points out that systems of Indian philosophy have a scientific outlook and a scientific basis.* In the first chapter of his *Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*, Dr. Seal presents a penetrating analysis of the physico-chemical theories of some important systems of Indian philosophy. In the first part of the chapter the "natural

*We may note Comte's influence on Dr. Seal when he seeks to discover a scientific outlook in ancient Indian philosophical systems.

philosophy" of the Sāṃkhya—Pātañjali system has been expounded. He has explained and interpreted scientifically the Sāṃkhya theory of evolution, conservation and transformation of energy, origin of matter and such other allied topics as were affiliated thereto. In his treatment of the Sāṃkhya system, he did not confine himself to the traditional doctrines of Kapila and Patañjali only. He frequently drew upon the Sāṃkhya elements of Rāmānuja school of Vedānta and mythological works like Viṣṇupurāṇa. Dr. Seal's approach has been synthetic and comprehensive.²⁶

*Moral and Aesthetic Considerations:
Modern Parallels*

It has been said that Dr. Seal was the first significant literary critic of the last one hundred years. His synoptic view of criticism comprised the entire panorama of human existence including man's endeavours in diverse fields and directions. It entails the problem of deciding whether judgments on literature are also judgments passed on contemporary society, social values, social idea, and ideals.

Incidentally morals vis-a-vis art come up before our mind and this vexed problem of art-morality relation has been tackled by Dr. Seal in his own inimitable way. The issue had been discussed threadbare when Dr. Seal spoke of moral teaching by aesthetic culture.

In his reply to a government Circular Dr. Seal discussed the need of "moral teaching by aesthetic culture", by which he meant the regulation of emotions and the inculcation of habits and modes of conduct prompted by such emotions. Morality, for Dr. Seal, had a positive social basis dissociated from those beliefs regarding ultimate realities, which are definitely formulated in the articles of religious faith. Moral teaching, according to him, had two positive foundations:

- (i) Social well-being and the inculcation of habits and conduct which promote such well-being.

- (ii) Culture of the emotions, what Dr. Seal called aesthetic culture, based not on religious principles or motive but on instinctive reactions in typical situations and relations of life. This was according to Dr. Seal, our objective.

The capital error was to teach religious beliefs and doctrines first and to follow them up by moral rules and precepts—a course which promoted enslavement and by reaction engendered scepticism. The proper course, on the other hand, was exactly the reverse. Theory of ultimate beliefs ought to have been left to a later stage in the development of reason when religious beliefs and metaphysical principles would properly engage our interest. Dr. Seal points out that²⁷ Sanskrit dramatists had a sense of propriety, and moral equilibrium which is offended by the final triumph of vice over virtue or of an unmoral fate over the human demand for equity and justice. For such triumph would offend the moral sense which was more fundamental if not more powerful than aesthetic sentiment. The Greeks believed in Fate or Destiny which was stronger than even Zeus and the Greek moral Sense which was so elastic, was contrasted with the Sanskrit dramatist's demand for justice and moral balances. Dr. Seal noted in this connection that Johnson too among the moderns was rigorous in his demand for proper moral proportions and "poetic justice". Milton ultimately accepted this concept of poetic justice in preference to "political justice".²⁸ Here we may further point out that Dr. Seal noted in the section on abnormal psychology in his *Autobiography* that Freud being confronted by criticism of his pet theory of sexual love being directed by the male child to his mother and by the female child to her father, fell back on the idea of love as such minus the sex taint as a principle of explanation of such infantile love. And Dr. Seal spoke of this point in Freud with great enthusiasm as he had a moralistic bias as was found in many other modern thinkers such as Croce and Cassirer.

Of course, in modern times we have seen storm raging round Ezra Pound on his being awarded the Bollingen Prize for his noted work, *The Pisan Cantos*. The issue involved therein

was whether art was purely formal and as such a moral in character. From Dr. Seal's point of view such a position was untenable as, according to him, aesthetic world was cocentric with other worlds of discourse. Dr. Seal is not alone in his belief. His concept of synoptic view finds its echo in a modern critic, Yvor Winters, when he distinguishes five steps in the critical process.

- (1) to state the relevant historical and biographical material,
- (2) to analyse the Writer's relevant literary theories.
- (3) to make a rational criticism of the paraphrasable content,
- (4) to make a rational criticism of feeling, style, language, and technique.
- (5) to make a final act of judgment. All these might be considered to lie within Dr. Seal's synoptic view of literature. Judged by the time and context of Dr. Seal he may be looked upon as extremely original in his formulation and application of this synoptic view and his genetic method.

Adjudged by the above criterion, i.e. viewed as a whole, Tagore's poetic achievement was characteristically complete. That is the view held by Dr. Seal inspite of his earlier, adverse criticism of Tagore. Dr. Seal considers that Tagore's early poems are exercises in emotional exaltation. To this he soon adds the art of imaginative transfiguration (as in *Urvaśī*). In his maturer achievement he develops the criticism of life without sacrificing either exaltation or transfiguration. Finally in this, his consummate later art, he has summed up all these elements and achieved the supreme mastery—the creation of a personality with an individual scheme of life, an individual outlook on the Universe. Thus Dr. Seal aptly brings out the uniqueness of Tagore's creative activity and that could alone be properly understood if he had viewed Tagore from this viewpoint of the totality. Judged piecemeal, Tagore had many shortcomings and when his creations were considered as a whole, his towering genius became evident. Dr. Seal's notion of the full-orbed

perfection implies this point of view concerning the totality of things and whenever anything was judged from a clouded partial point of view, it was destined to end in a futile intellectual exercise. Anything, circumscribed, limited, or provincialised might represent some "closed system" of truth and hence a distortion of truth which was not worthy of pursuit. We all know that he had been a seeker after flawless, full-orbited perfection and this vision of the perfect unity did not allow him to build up any closed system as it did not approximate this vision of perfection.²⁹ May be, it was the inherent weakness of discursive reason or of language itself that it could not reflect the totality, the vision of the whole and we may note in passing that for this inaptitude, the analytical method was rejected by Dr. Seal. Dr. Seal's distaste for this "closed system" was shared by Romain Rolland* and his fashionable art-connoisseur Sylvian Kohn speaks ill of "closed chamber-music" or "Sofa music". Anything closed smacked of "artificiality" and that was exactly what Dr. Seal was averse to. This ghost of perfection haunted him and he was never satisfied with what he wrote. Tagore's poetic works (as judged by Dr. Seal) somewhere reached his ideal of completeness. We may suggest here that judged thus, Tagore was a greater artist than Dr. Seal as Tagore could come closer to Dr. Seal's idea of "compactness". Dr. Seal could not approximate his own ideal. That was exactly what Dr. Seal wrote by way of confession which was to the effect that he could never approximate his ideal of perfection and completeness.

Dr. Seal is known to have characterised his philosophy as "synthetic philosophy" as he took a view which considered all probable aspects of the problem in question. But his methodology was marked by keen, penetrating analysis and as such Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya³⁰ rightly remarked that

his (Dr. Seal's) real interest was in the abstract analysis of logic and epistemology. This penetrating analysis is present in every thing Dr. Seal thought and wrote. In a letter dated 29th May, 1914, written to Tagore from Cambridge,

*See S. K. Nandi, *Aesthetics of Romain Rolland*.

Dr. Seal told him frankly that *Gitanjali* as rendered into English, was not his best creation and a correct appraisal of Tagore's genius would not be possible if he were judged solely by his '*Gitanjali*' as rendered into English. The English speaking people branded Tagore as 'Mystic' without knowing fully the peculiar character of Tagore's mysticism and Dr. Seal vehemently disliked it.

Dr. Seal, though a mystic, was a rational type and according to some, this rational approach to problems, intellectual understanding of phenomena was not incompatible with mysticism. (We have discussed this point in the foregoing chapter.) He did not hesitate to say that Yeats and Underhill did not very well appreciate Tagore when they considered him to be a mystic poet: Dr. Seal thought that Tagore was the best even amongst the modern poets. He wanted that people all over the world should know that there was much better stuff in Tagore's other works, e.g. his dramas, novels, stories and poems than in *Gitanjali* as catered to the Western readers. This evolution of *Gitanjali*, for not being a criticism of life, was not quite in keeping with Dr. Seal's postulation of a synthetic outlook. We consider that *Gitanjali* offered some transcendental principles of explanation which not only explained the ultimacy of human life in the context of God-man relation but also thus explained human existence as a total, completed phenomenon. Art, as interpretation of life, or criticism of life gives a piecemeal view. It had certain innate weaknesses. If such a business of art is essential for art qua art, art must be vested with a purpose, not quite in keeping with the freedom of the artists. To interpret life means stressing of an arbitrary function of fine arts and it is made a matter of intellectual apprehension only; this goes against his synoptic view of art. Art as such cannot be considered intellectual; Kant's characterisation of the aesthetic purpose as "purposiveness without a purpose" fully brings out its enigmatic and indefinable nature. So this characterisation of Dr. Seal can not be accepted without reservation. And we think that Dr. Seal also did not uphold this position when he visualised the future of art in his *Autobiography*. Dr. Seal felt that the future lay

with a composite form of art, free from the limitations of an individual art like sculpture, painting or music. But it would have free recourse at pleasure to several media, individually or collectively, such as colour, sound and motion and would appeal to all the sense at once and to the soul as well, all these being consummated in poetry which appeals to the imagination and generalises the senses. So herein the role of art as criticism of life has been subservient to something which had a greater appeal to imagination. Intellect and discursive reasoning have been relegated to an inferior position and as such art as the criticism of life was not given the highest premium. But Dr. Seal's flare for analysis and critical evaluation did not leave him and he repeatedly told that one should be critical enough in appraising an art-work. Other considerations should be avoided. Dr. Seal amply demonstrates this critical attitude when he reviewed Tagore's earlier works. He applied the genetic method in the field of aesthetics, from the philosophico-historical, the comparative and the psychological points of view. His understanding of the different phases of the evolution of art is noteworthy. Dr. Seal noted three main basis of art development in the history of world-art and we may refer to his *Autobiography* in point for a detailed account of the different periods in art history:

1. Hellenic—It would be wrong to say that Greek art confined itself to the body or to the mind as expressed in the body. In fact, it expressed the soul as well, so far as this could be done in and through the body but it considered as beyond art whatever could not be expressed or adumbrated in body, nerve and muscle or in pose and situation.
2. Renaissance—In contrast with this, Michael Angelo, Titian and Leonardo da Vinci depicted the soul magnifying or idealising Nature so far as Nature could express the Christian concepts and experiences of the soul, Rembrandt also expressed this in his *chirascuro*.
3. Hindu—The Buddhist-Hindu idea of art was again different from this, drawing its inspiration not from a living model of flesh and blood but from *Dhyāna* or ecstatic meditation which revealed the form and figure to the eye of the mind. More-

over, what was sought to be represented was not the individual but the type expressed in and through the individual and this type was more and more realised in and through *Dhyāna*.

This classification is certainly an improvement on what Hegel did in point. Dr. Seal virtually offers a transcendental principle as the guiding principle of art classification in so far as the Hellenic and the Renaissance periods were concerned and sought to adumbrate this principle through *Dhyāna* on Hindu art; his criticism of Hegel's classification of fine arts may be looked upon as "constructive" when judged in the light of this new model.

Neo-romantic Art: Analysis

In section II of the *New Essays in Criticism* Dr. Seal placed before us some canons of neo-romantic art in a convenient formula:

(1) A sense of discordance between the inner and the outer, between spirit and nature, the ideal and the real. The social environment is one of *Sturm und drang*, of fret and fury, of ideal revolt or uprising of the human spirit. The movement takes its actual rise, however, not in an unhealthy ferment of dissolution, but in an inevitable process which transfigures the old order and lifts it up to the absolute by raising it into self-consciousness and subjectivity. Thus a current of transfiguration sets in, and its significance was of considerable magnitude.

(2) The Second element is that of subjective egoism, which arising in the passage from a mechanical subjectivity, sets up the gratification of the individual consciousness as the standard in questions of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness. No stage of mind or art, Dr. Seal contends, can subsist in an atmosphere of mere negation; and accordingly we find that in the course of the development of the neo-romantic art and consciousness, the negative element—the deadly strife with doubt and despair, and the subjective

egoism—tends to disappear, and critical and constructive elements come into play. At this stage there is a fusion of the two streams; the current of transfiguration of the old order mingles with the stream of positive reconstruction of the new. The confluence results in a mighty stir and commotion. An objective basis is sought for life, so as to lift it out of the plane of over-subjectivity and morbid self-consciousness. In the reconstruction or new synthesis of life and consciousness thus attempted, novel ideas as to the place and position of man in the Universe and his destiny, a new criticism of social life and relations and new ethical and religious ideals, possess the minds of men. The function of neo-romantic literary art Dr. Seal points out, is to embody these regulative ideas and ideals in correspondent types and symbols, to invest them with appropriate emotions and images to interweave them with the sympathies and affinities, the historic associations and the imaginative interests of the race and thus to make them essential conditions of the conservation and solidarity of the social regime. The critical and constructive elements of neo-romantic literary art have been systematically analysed and methodically registered by Dr. Seal with the help of a convenient formula of criticism (as stated above) and it takes note of these three fundamental aspects:

- (a) The ideal content of consciousness, the regulative idea of central conception, which is here an objective criticism of life.
- (b) The mythopaeic process or embodiment of this idea in a *Vorstellung*—which may be termed “the mythology of literary art”.
- (c) The crowning transfiguration or the birth of a new emotion, as of a new tone or harmony, transfiguring the imaginative material.

Dr. Seal tells us that literature has several divisions which may be classified thus.³¹

Poetry. Poetry proper is a species composition marked by two sets of character:

- (i) Imagination, emotion and power,
- (ii) rhythmic beats in some ordered sequence with or without rhymes or consonances.

Imaginative prose or poetic prose. A composition may possess the first of the above two sets of characteristics and in addition some sort of cadence without any regular or set order or sequence of beats and thus not be classed as poetry. This imaginative prose with a cadence of its own must be distinguished from poetry not only by external characters but also by the fact that it appeals primarily to knowledge and understanding to which imagination and emotion are strictly subordinated. Tales and rhapsodies as well as dithyrambic prose compositions belong to this category, but with the emotional character more strongly pronounced.

Extreme examples are Fenelon's *Telemachus*, Lamb's *Rosalind Ossian*, etc. Dr. Seal further refers to Sanskrit poetics and tells us that the Sanskrit poetics distinguishes between the forms, poetry in verse and poetry in prose, the latter comprising imaginative prose and literary prose. Dr. Seal omits here the *champu* mixed verse and prose composition. We may note here that while Sanskrit specialises in *Gadya Kavya*, Greek specialises in Rhetoric.

Literary prose one step further removed from poetry. This comprises stories, romances and novels.

A vast department of creative literature which is the characteristic output of the last three or four centuries and more specially of the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries brought new creative spurts. The new departments, notes Dr. Seal, are most marked in the Scandinavian and Russian literatures but the great war marks a historical terminus. The world was then entering a new era in which the mass consciousness or the concept of the mass mind would be the governing idea. The masses, the community, the age and the race (humanity) would

be the regulative faces of the new movement. According to him, art will always be an individual creation more or less but will no longer be individual in aim and motif. For art, according to Dr. Seal, will now concern itself with the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, the loves and hates, or the ideas and ideals, of the masses, the community, the age and the race. The heroes and heroines will, no doubt, be individuals, but they will have a representative character as being both types and individuals embodying the governing forces and ideas of the age (Herein Dr. Seal elongates his idea of the objective criticism of life as a principle of explanation for aesthetic universality.)

Prose literature. This appeals primarily to understanding knowledge or reason and comes under any of the following heads: history, science, philosophy, art, and religion.

The drama. It may fall under three classes:

- (i) the drama of plot
- (ii) the drama of character
- (iii) the drama of ideas (and ideals) with characteristic environment and development, these being adumbrated or represented by individual characters or dramatic personae. Dr. Seal notes in passing that the Sanskrit drama had no tragedy. Besides comedies, it had a class of plays appealing to the sentiment of quiescence (Shantam).

Dr. Seal further noted that the individualistic drama was giving place more and more to a world drama (Weltan Schauung) in which the conflict or struggle is between opposed world forces as represented by individual characters as protagonists and antagonists.* Literature also has artificial, imperfect and mixed types (in verse or prose) and these can be classified as follows.

Verse. There are several species of compositions which possess only one of the two characters that must continue to form poetry proper, viz. there may be verses which have the

*Dr. Seal's view in this regard may be compared to Romain Rolland's ideas of "People's Theatre".

second set of characteristics (i.e. rhythmic beats) and strongly appeal to a sense of aesthetic culture and taste but are without imaginative power or emotional exaltation.

Prose. Similarly there may be two separate classes of imaginative prose or poetic prose, viz. (a) mere prose with cadence without appeal to the imagination or (b) prose which appeals to imagination but is devoid of cadence.

The principle of the objective criticism of life leads us inevitably to the thorny problem of art-morality relation and in this context one has to understand the nature of laughter as a social corrective and the role of satire as a remedial measure against social ills. Dr. Seal's views in point are too pronounced. He spoke of Pope's mock heroic being contrasted with satire which was but inverted moral indignation. The group of "immoralists" as headed by Wycherly was disliked by Dr. Seal and he depicts their world as follows:

(1) the unmoral (2) the immoral—a return to the freedom of nature was the proper sphere of art, and (3) the demoralised—source of pathological experiences.

But Dr. Seal's preference for moral values and his consideration of art as moral had its basis in his implicit faith in the identity of the good and the beautiful. Anything beautiful cannot evoke any sense of the immoral as aesthetic appeal is always presupposed by harmony and detachment. This detachment leads to deindividualisation and this deindividualisation or typification (as has been called by Dr. Seal) again leads to a better understanding of the problem of universalism in art. A reference to the ideal, an imaginative transfiguration of the real helps art attain the magnificent stature that it attains in course of the art-evolution, as noted by Dr. Seal. In this perspective his evaluation of the neo-romantic literature of Bengal will interest us. His views, though in many respects, compare favourably with the latest views in point, may not be accepted by many, when he gives us a critical appraisal of the neo-romantic literature of Bengal.

Bengali Literature: A Review

Firstly, Dr. Seal noted the indigenous Orientalism of the poems of Kasirama, Krittibasa, and Bhārat Chandra working up traditional material in the native mould. As products of art, according to Dr. Seal, they bear the same relation to the

later classical epos of Micheal Mudhusudan Dutt and Hem Chandra Banerjee, that Indian sculpture and painting as exhibited in the rock caves and Indian architecture of the rock cut Chaityas and Viharas or the Hindu temples of Southern India do to the Parthenon or the Roman Basilicas, Pheidias, Zeus or Athene of ivory and gold or even the remains of Byzantine painting and sculpture.

We may note here that such comparisons are far-fetched and ambiguous. They do not make the issue in any way clearer. Moreover Dr. Seal's analogies and comparisons go against the well-defined character of analogy as we find in formal logic. For a rigid condition in analogy to be precisely followed is that the less known is made known through analogy by citing a better known object or phenomenon. Dr. Seal moves in the reverse direction and that made him all the more obscure. His profound knowledge of and a consequent partiality for Western classics make some of his aesthetic judgments unintelligible and misleading. In offering such comparisons Dr. Seal conveniently forgot his principle of the "fundamentals" as he himself laid down while explaining his comparative method. Superficial similarities often led Dr. Seal to draw comparison between dissimilars. The big and the small, the great and the common often teamed together and those comparisons overlooked the fundamentals. The fringe-similarities duped the master and he took them for fundamentals. Thus Dr. Seal often placed together English poets, great and small, a critic of renown and a tyro of a critic on the same pedestal while evaluating Bengali poetry and literature. This may suggest that Dr. Seal was not quite conversant with the excellence or otherwise of the works he reviewed. His mention of Kamīni Roy's poems as good

specimens of Bengali literature leaves one confused when he refuses recognition to Tagore's *Gitanjali*.³² According to Dr. Seal, the later Bengali epics were all fashioned into classic serenity and repose although they exhibited profundity of life and movement. In style and conception the *Meghnādhbadha* of Michael Madhusudan Dutt was classic. Babu Hemchandra Banerjee's *Vṛtra-Samhāra* goes the same way although his treatment of the subject matter was more in the mixed Roman architectural fashion whereas Michael's treatment leaned heavily on a genuine sculptural style, which typified the classical art. Dr. Seal considered Babu Navinchandra Sen's *Battle of Plassey* to be an epic conceived and executed in the form of a metrical-historical romance. It illustrated the pictorial-musical style that appertained to the romantic school. The subjective individualism in Bengali poets, claimed Dr. Seal, led to a rigid mechanical order. One wonders how subjective individualism and the quantum of freedom it guarantees could give rise to a mechanical order. When art or poetry comes to be purely subjective reactions of an individual, it could not possibly stoop to a rigidity to be found in a mechanical set up. When art is the unfettered response of the individual to the environment, then certainly it is indeterminate and indeterminable. This uncertain character of art has been the subject of much discussion since Croce and Gentile, as art being the desubjectification of the subjective feelings of the artist, leaves much room for freedom. Meaning, emotive and referential, in art remains elastic as the freedom of the critic is always there present in addition to that of the artist. For the reader or the critic is a second creator. The creation is recreated again in the reader and gets a second transmutation. So the nature of art is indeterminate, if and when it is taken to be subjective. That is why Dr. Seal's senior contemporary Rabindranath told us that art was *māyā*. Because it was the subjective response of the individual, it was simply indefinable. However, let us follow Dr. Seal. He tells us that it is curious to note that in Bengal (as was the case in France in the last century), the illumination led to a mechanical subjectivity and out of this environment the neo-romantic movement arose. The first remarkable product of Bengali literature of the neo-romantic

type was Babu Chandra Sekhara Mukherjee's *Udbhrānta Préma*. His preference for this work may be attributed to its emotional transfiguration, which Dr. Seal calls the "magic of the Udbhranta Prema". This virtue in *Udbhrānta Préma* also spelt the absence of an "objective criticism" of life, as life had a positive aspect to offer and its criticism ought to have been Constructive in character. That is why Dr. Seal could not rest satisfied with this "remarkable product of Bengali literature". The negative criticism of life as was found in *Udbhrānta Préma* gave place to a message of love as was found in Babu Rabindranath Tagore's *Prakṛitir Pratiśodha*. Dr. Seal hailed Babu Rabindranath Tagore as the "First neo-romantic poet in Bengali literature". In pursuance of his ideal of "objective criticism of life" and in deference to the logical prescription that negative definition was no definition at all, Dr. Seal rightly placed Tagore's *Prakṛitir Pratisodha* above Chandra Sekhara's *Udbhrānta Préma*. But it may be said that Seal's evaluation of literary works did not always conform to the principles of literary criticism as enunciated by him. That is how most of his criticisms and comparisons were not fully intelligible to the modern students of aesthetics and literary criticism. Some of them have been very critical of Dr. Seal on this account. To quote one of them:³³

It is difficult for an intelligent reader of to-day to share Dr. Seal's enthusiastic admiration for the gushy style and vapid sentiments of Chandrasekhar Mukherjee's *Udbhranta Prem*. His expectations of Kamini Sen (she was not yet married), a competent poet but not quite outstanding, have been belied by the course of literary history. His views of some European writers are sometimes disappointing. He lumps together Browning and Buchanan; Swinburne and the pseudo-Swinburne from Australia, Sir Lewis Morris, Schiller and that incomparable bore, Kotzebue; Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats on the one hand and the Waston brothers Ritson, Ellies and Layden on the other.

We do not wholly subscribe to the views as quoted above but it cannot be denied that Dr. Seal in his literary criticism could not wholly absolve himself of the charges levelled here against him. This could happen because his enunciation of the principles of literary criticism and his application of these principles could not go together, i.e. these principles had no "functional potential" in Dr. Seal's criticisms or reviews.

Tagore's Literature Reviewed

However, we may follow Dr. Seal in his estimate of Tagore's *Prakṛtir Pratiśodha*.

The *Prakṛtir Pratiśodha*, according to Dr. Seal, was just one step in advance of the negative criticism of life as was found in *Udbhṛānta Préma*. He thought that *Prakṛtir Pratiśodha* held the same place among the "modern reading plays" as Hemchandra's *Vṛtra-Samhāra* and *Dasa Mahāvidyā* held among the "modern epics" grouped under the metaphysical epos. Dr. Seal was an ardent lover of Western classics and in the course of the long and continued discussion on Tagore's dramas he brings in Western parallels to compare with Tagore's works. Tagore was a contemporary of Dr. Seal, as we all know, and his regard for Tagore is well-known. But his remark on Tagore's *Prakṛtir Pratiśodha* while being compared with Paracelsus* may draw protests from serious students of Tagore literature. Dr. Seal wrote:

A moment's comparison between the Paracelsus and the 'Prakṛtir Pratiśodha' makes the immense superiority of the former manifest in point of profound speculative insight, dramatic range and complexity of life, a sense of the social problem and of human perfectibility and a masterly comprehension of

*This frank evaluation and doubtful rating of Tagore's works at this stage is a pointer to the fact that personal relations were no consideration for Dr. Seal in matters of aesthetic evaluation. His detachment as a critic is too pronounced to be missed. Dr. Seal was after full-orbed truth and his convictions in the matter were expressed with brutal frankness even though at places his judgments proved unworthy of his high talents. His intellectual honesty and aesthetic sincerity are to be noted.

the many sided forces and tendencies which go to make up the stream of existence.

The conflict in Tagore's drama, according to Dr. Seal, is between an individualistic search after truth, in the fashion of the Indian ascetic idealism and the necessity of individualistic affection and it does not rise to the high platform of a representative struggle of the race between the ideal goals of infinite knowledge and infinite love. Many would like to join issue with Dr. Seal in this regard. A modern critic would point out that Tagore's synoptic view of the whole, his belief in a continuum from the infra-human world to the human and therefrom to the super-human could not very well express itself through *Prakṛtir Pratiśōdha* as and when it mirrored "ascetic idealism" and when, in fine, spoke of love, it breathed an air of unity, which was a child of the vedantic identity of souls on the one hand, and of the soul and the Bramhan, on the other. Art never cares for types. It has the character of an individual and that too of an unique individual. It has hardly any representative character, i.e. representing a group or a race. The objective environment as viewed by that artist is his "compelling situation" which gives rise to a work of art. So if it is conditioned and inspired by a compelling environment, the subjective-objective character of the environment itself leaves the artist with enormous freedom. So, the rigid mechanical order, of which Dr. Seal thought in this context, was not really there. It was a myth which Dr. Seal took for the real. Art was not concerned with generalities and as such the art-content need not be in any way representative. If by "art-content" Dr. Seal had meant the "reference", it will vary from individual to individual. And if he had meant the "referent", this referent is again suggested by the "reference" of the symbol presented. So art can never lead to "mechanical rigidity" under any condition. Ideas and ideals which have more or less a definite meaning cannot guide the destiny of an art-moment, far less the construction of an individual art-image. Indeterminateness was essentially an artistic quality and it went against the grain of all philosophy and axiology.

However, a rigid follow-up of Dr. Seal's line of thinking would help us understand his evaluation of Tagore in Dr. Seal's own perspective. According to him, the neo-romantic meta-physical drama in the hands of Tagore did not transcend the individualistic stage of art. Arnold's idea of a moral profundity in matters of judging art works must have influenced Dr. Seal immensely when he wrote.

...if the negative criticism of life, disappearing, gives place to a conflict between subject and object and which does not go beyond the need of an individual nature and treats a question like that of the struggle between knowledge and love, yaga or jnana and prema, not in reference to the objective requirements of social life or of the ideal perfectibility of the race and the impulses of humanitarian enthusiasm, but solely from the standpoint of individual psychology, the same limitation characterises the author's Prabhāta Sangīta and Sandhyā Sangīta (songs of sunrise and sunset).

According to him, in these songs, Bengali poetry rose to the pitch of the neo-romantic lyric. The intense egoistic subjectivity of these poems, untouched by any of the real interests of life or society,* is almost without a parallel in the lyrical literature of the neo-romantic age. The deadly and desperate struggle to which all subjective egoism is doomed, gives rise to "The Wail of Defeat", "The Despair in Hope" and the "Invocation to Sorrow". In most of Tagore's lyrics as referred to in the said works, the transfiguration was perfect. But two of the three that constituent elements of the neo-romantic lyric were wanting.

*The observation Dr. Seal as regards the "real interest of life" is not fully convincing when we read in Romain Rolland of a lady name Maiwida Von Mysenberg who got the personal problems of her emotional life solved after reading Shakespeare's *Othello*. This functional value or pragmatic utility of *Othello* was certainly not within the mental ken of Shakespeare himself and he never meant this "purpose" for this grand tragedy. But in a way it served the "real interest of life" of Dr. Seal and that too after the lapse of more than a couple of centuries. So this accusation of Dr. Seal, as it presupposes a finality in the effectiveness of the art-work is improper and unacceptable to us.

They were the criticism of life, whether negative or reconstructive and the mythopoeia. In *Prabhāta-Sangīta*, Dr. Seal notes a greater measure of criticism of life, a higher metaphysical grasp and intellectualism and a greater objectivity, as manifested in the poet's newly developed capacity for the imaginative reproduction of the alien and outer phases of Nature's life. The Eternity of life with its three realms of Eternity, the Kingdom of Song, the Kingdom of Love and the Kingdom of life, is no doubt, a fine illustration of interpretative criticism and transfiguration. Dr. Seal notes them; but he also notes in these poems "a want of imaginative, constructive symbolising power". For this intrinsic want Tagore's work missed reaching the memorable "mythopoeic height which Goethe's work 'Three Reverences' and De Quincey's 'Three Ladies of Sorrow' attain".

In a critical vein, Dr. Seal continues, the lyrics of Tagore, as referred to above, were in what may be termed the elementary style, which employed elementary emotions and images, like the elementary lines and colours or the fundamental musical proportions in the sister arts to effect the transfiguration. Dr. Seal thought that the simplicity of diction was only an external mark of the inner elementariness.* Tagore's lyrics displayed, in a very marked and emphatic manner, the capabilities of this elementary style and as a reaction against an exaggerated form of an opposite variety, appeared to have effected a revolution in the diction and cadence of Bengali lyrical and dramatic poetry.

Dr. Seal thought that Vānu Sinha's *Padāvalī* fairly matched Keats's reproduction in verse of medieval Italian romance and passion. The sacred love of Rādhikā and Krishna, as portrayed in the *Padāvalī* introduced the contemporary readers to the next definite step taken by the neo-romantic movement in Bengal. Thus Tagore's place was sought to be determined in a world of giants such as Goethe, Keats, Shelley, and Milton. Instead of

*The truth may lie at the other extreme. Simplicity in style and diction has been looked upon as the product of high level culture and sophistication. Simplicity of diction and style as found in the Bible is difficult to attain. Tagore's *Gitanjali*, Gandhi's *My experiments with truth*, Moore's *Principia Ethica* though simple in diction certainly do not suggest inner elementariness of the authors concerned.

being profuse in adjectives Dr. Seal wanted an objective appraisal of one of his mighty contemporaries and it is interesting to note how he judged the earlier works of the poet, who was destined to be a world poet in future. It should be noted here that Dr. Seal was much too prepossessed with the aesthetic ideas and norms of the West and the Arnoldian bias of moral aesthetics. For him art was moral and this could be asserted with a more cogent logic and with a greater degree of probability from his viewpoint of the whole. This has been done by such eminent thinkers as Croce and Cassirer on their independent lines of argumentation. Dr. Seal might have gone the same way specially when the whole gamut of ancient Indian aesthetics sought to identify art and morality and considered this moral art to be a handmaid of religion. For example, excellence of Vānu Sinha's *Padāvalī* was not judged on its own. Its excellence was discovered only when it compared favourably with Keats's reproduction of medieval Italian romance and passion. Whenever he wrote on aesthetics, classical art examples from the West were cited again and again and influence of classical aesthetics of the West appeared to be too pronounced. Like Hegel himself, Dr. Seal also betrayed a lack of proper understanding of Indian art and aesthetics. Of course, his ignorance of Indian art and aesthetics was not that "colossal" as we find in Hegel but considering his rich information and sound understanding of Western art and aesthetics, we are constrained to observe that Dr. Seal was not equally well-grounded in Indian aesthetics. This one factor was responsible for many of his judgements being rejected as unsound and lop-sided. This goes against his own explanation he offered while explaining the comparative method, explained earlier. Often he based the comparisons on "fringe similarities" and this did not help the reader understand his point.

We have already referred to some such unbalanced judgements on Bengali literature and some misleading and unwarranted comparisons which far from clarifying his position helped to further confound the issue. But it must be admitted on all hands that Dr. Seal's suggested views on art and literature go much beyond the Hegelian view and in some reasons measure

are an improvement upon Hegel. Viewed against the background of his intellectual convictions and the convictions of his type of people, it was not easy to go beyond Hegel and look beyond the Hegelian world. He looked ahead of his time and this fact of denunciation of Hegel speaks of the dynamic character of his thinking. He refused to consider the phase of romanticism, as Hegel considered it, as the final phase of the course of aesthetic instinct of man, a phase after which there cannot possibly be any further development.

We may note in passing that inspite of some lopsidedness as noted above, Dr. Seal's view of life and art may be looked upon as evolutionary, dynamic, and a vertical continuum.³⁴ Dr. Seal's postulation of the neo-romantic phase of art and literature on the basis of his prodigious learning in literary and social history of the Western world as well as of the Eastern is commendable. Inspite of some anomalies as are found in his system of aesthetics his penchant for theoretical discussion is impressive and the range of his reading is comprehensive and somewhat eclectic. His admirable style of writing combined rational thinking with imaginative intensity. There are passages in his writing, which rise to heights of prophetic vision and are thus linked up with his sole attempt at creative writing, "The Quest Eternal".

His Quest Eternal: An Analysis

Herein Dr. Seal combines mysticism with pure poetry. We have already noted in the preceding chapter how mysticism and poetry fused and blended in Tagore's poetical works. Mysticism of a certain kind was an inseparable and indigenous feature of the intellectual school. In Tennyson this type of intellectuality blended in mysticism.³⁵ Again this blending gives a type of obscurity that is evident in such mystic poets as Tennyson and Browning. Dr. Seal is no exception to this rule and he is obscure at places. This obscurity might have been a product of Seal's revolt against individualism which in turn may be looked upon as a product of his mental evolution and a byproduct of his postulation of a synoptic view of life. Individualism has been

considered to be the sheet anchor of all art but curiously enough this idea of revolt against individualism was incorporated in his new concept of art as enunciated in his *Autobiography*. His maturer wisdom refused to put the highest premium on "individuality of art" and that is why he, in his last testament did not continue to worship this individualistic character of art and it is too evident in his *Autobiography*.³⁶ His test or criterion for aesthetic judgement was no longer the individual consciousness (and yet he passed aesthetic judgements entirely relying on his own "individual consciousness", i.e. on how he became conscious of the aesthetic values of the literature reviewed.)

Let us follow Dr. Seal in his enunciation of his new concept of art (as was defined in the *Autobiography*).³⁷ His test of truth, his final court of appeal, was not the individual consciousness but through it and beyond it the mass-consciousness or mass mind of which the consensus is the living expression and of which the "proletariat is a better guarantee than the majority". The successive steps, according to him, in this "revolt" are:

(1) The mass-consciousness or mass mind working in and through the aggregate of individual minds. This is not organised or expressed through any particular organ or vehicle but is recognised as the consensus working in and through the "proletariat".

(2) The community consciousness or the community mind. The community is held together by bonds of a common tradition and practice, is a more organised expression of the consensus than the mass mind.

(3) The age consciousness or age mind. This is a living force and develops from age to age.

(4) The race consciousness or race mind. By race consciousness Dr. Seal here means the human race in general and not any particular race or people. By race consciousness, accordingly is meant the stage of human evolution which has been attained by men at that particular turn of human history.

Dr. Seal herein noted that the world had entered on a new phase of art-ideals and art-constructions. The ruling ideas of

this new world of art are the mass consciousness, the community consciousness, the age consciousness and the race consciousness as explained above. The hero and the heroine will no longer be "individuals" as such in their own right, but individuals as representing or typifying the ruling forces in the mass consciousness, the community consciousness, the age consciousness, and the race consciousness.

The revolt against the concept of art which ruled the world from Greek to contemporary Europe had many phases and Dr. Seal notes them as follows:

(1) Every man and woman became the hero and heroine in this new world of art. The fine and the finical had been completely routed. Every man and wife become arbiters of what was artistic or not.

(2) Another type which is gradually making headway in the world-drama (Weltan Schauung) of which the hero is no individual or person but the masses, the age, the race or humanity in general. Dr. Seal quotes one such Viśvanātya (World Drama) in Bengali as *Devottara*, revolutionising the ruling ideas and ideals in the aesthetic world.

(3) Folk-drama with folk-dance. This is a revolt against individualistic love-drama, which ruled the world from Shakespeare to Goethe though Goethe in his very last dramatic phase which went much beyond *Faust* and *Mephistopheles* anticipated the world-drama.

(4) Another phase is confessedly destructive rather than constructive. It is the revolt of the indecent, the vulgar, and the erotic against universally accepted ideas of art and taste. James Joyce and others led the movement.

This movement of insurgence in the plastic arts more specially in sculpture and architecture was led by Rodin. That was how Dr. Seal reviewed the whole process of art-development including its possibilities. It may be noted here that in the light of the thesis developed his judgement on art as moral or on so-called immoral art as destructive does not stand the test of scrutiny. We hold that a conscious purpose behind any

creative work defeats its own purpose. We do not rule out the possibility of art being "occasional" or "purposive" in a way but it was not "consciously purposive" from the viewpoint of the artist. To be more precise we hold that art may turn to be "functional" or serving some purpose, but that "purpose" cannot be deemed to be pre-conceived and pre-determined. If there be any "purpose" in art that purpose is always open to the viewer or the reader to be reconstructed by him according to his own light and requirement. But Dr. Seal's "race consciousness" or "age consciousness" or "community consciousness" might discover this purpose as well in a work of art even though it might have been considered as "immortal" and "destructive" by Dr. Seal. This brings out the difficulties as involved in referring art-work to anything but an individual taste and individual understanding. To be faithful to his own formulation of aesthetic criteria, Dr. Seal will have to admit that his judgements on art were not final and he himself could not accept them if they were not ratified by the race consciousness or age consciousness.

Before we conclude this dissertation, we may refer to "Quest Eternal", trying at a descriptive formulation of its subject-matter and critical evaluation of its aesthetic qualities. The poem opens with the gorgeous picture of a mighty ocean, heaving and falling under the canopy of a silent sky spreading to the end of vision. The hero, a Greek priest familiar with the Indian lore, relates the story of man commencing from the stage of his cultural infancy. He has travelled as far East as Taxila or Mathura in India and spent quite sometime in Bactria. In the course of his world-travels he has made it a point to study the philosophy, God-lore and fine arts of the Hindus. He watches and observes how in the primitive man consciousness emerges out of dumb matter and blind sense. He is overwhelmed with a sense of wonder at the beauty of the universe, sees himself silhouetted everywhere in the skies among the stars. Similar experiences in the East and the West are revealed in their mythologies.³⁸ The milieu that created this ancient ideal as conceived by Dr. Seal was half-agnostic and half neo-Platonic.

The humanism of Dr. Seal's ancient hero finds expression in the following invocations.³⁹

Thee nothing human doth displease,
 For thou has not disdained to wear the human face !
 Thy Muses, Graces, Charities
 Are human mysteries ;
 Thou tastest of the cup from which
 Thou freely serv'st man's race³⁹.

This cycle of hymns is encyclopaedic enough to comprise new forms of the God-head—intelligential essences and fair humanities, the maid Eternal, the child Eternal and the Mighty Mother. The apparitions of the God-head as the terrible and the domoniatic are invoked as much as those of the raptures and rhythms. The verses present the lover of poetry with fine literary forms. While watching the progress of the human mind, one is not forced to enquire about the dates and localities, the chronologies, geographies, and ethnologies of the "cosmic waves" progression. The ideology was concrete and yet universal enough to rise to the level of pure poetry. Dr. Seal had definitely shown diversity of creative power as regards form and matter. If the ancient ideal was given out in the form of a hymn coming from a Greek priest, the medieval ideal found expression in and through a ballad in the second hymn. The second hymn depicts man's quest about the ultimate truth in the medieval world as revealed in the accounts of the Magians, Gnostics and the neo-Platonists. The hero of the medieval ideal is the Wizard Knight. He is a product not so much of the Catholic Weltanschauung as of the three mystical brotherhoods of the age, namely, Platonic, Syrian, and Magian. Indeed, the psyche of this Knight-errant is definitely in conflict with the Catholic type. In his mental gestalt had entered such rationalistic world views as those of the Mutazilas and Ikhwanus Safa. The revived Neo-Platonism of Syria and to a certain extent, the ideas of the Magian-lore had likewise contributed to the making of Dr. Seal's medieval hero. The hero is an uncompromising Titan, a dare-devil pilgrim of truth, a veritable Satyagrahi, as we find in Tagore and Gandhi. The peace of Catholicism is the furthest removed from the psyche of this

medieval hero. He disparages the gifts of the virgin Mother; the gift of bliss he craves for was not the "blind bliss", the bliss associated with meekness, weakness, prayers, and tears. His is a stranger peace, the peace of the struggling, combative, creative souls. He was a votary of truth and freedom and was not bent on peace and hope at any price. He wanted to be one of "seers".

whose eye the ideal firmament clears;
No longer Destiny's minions
but co-workers free

(II. 213-215)

The third Quest, the hero of which is a Pacific islander whose sweetheart has been lost in a storm, seeks the way to master death. It has been rightly pointed that Dr. Seal's modern hero was Humanity itself in its simple universality. The problem of civilisation vis-a-vis the primitive and the pagan constitutes the fundamental clan vital of this hero. Psyche, the soul's vision of deathless love, as well as Prometheus, the Deliverer from the spiritual background of the strife, that is being waged in the modern setting against the savage ritual of the Omophagic sacrifice. The hero's ambition was to be *martyunjaya*, a conqueror of death, i.e. to attain mastery over the evil forces which seek to frustrate all ideal strivings. Thus Dr. Seal conceived a new Faust for the twentieth century. The modern hero's quest for immortality is gradually transformed from the ambition of an individual into that of all mankind for redemption (cf. Sri Aurobindo's ideas in point as explained in a subsequent chapter). But the redeemer dreamt of is neither an external nor a universal force but the individual soul itself purified and illuminated. In this grand epic of the march of human personality through the ages we hear very often the strains of creation's choral song which comes "bursting with the uproarious role of Acons". It was the poetry of the cosmic voice.

Chanting the law of man's
deliverance,
Wisdom to master Death,
the Power of Life.

(III. 971-972)

Those who do not know that Dr. Seal was a reputed aesthetic thinker and a celebrated professor of philosophy, will not fail to enjoy the *rasa* of these dignified verses as some very brilliant and beautiful creations of our own times in the realm of poetry. His neo-romantic art comes true in flesh and blood in the *Quest Eternal*. His aesthetic idea was invested with a glaring form in his poetic creation. Yet we must note with Benoy Kumar Sarkar⁴⁰ that this magnificent poetic work was not marked by "isms" and abstractions. Professor Sarkar rightly compares Dr. Seal's *Quest Eternal* with Browning's *Paracelsus* in Dr. Seal's elucidation of both the medieval and the modern ideals. The two tragedies as conceived by Dr. Seal, are superb and his creative genius furnished the twentieth century with two remarkable exponents or rather embodiments of the cosmic struggle. In his imaginative flight he drew up the portrait of universal humanism that we saw earlier in his extension of Hegel's romantic art to the new horizons of neo-Romantic art. To Dr. Seal (we have already pointed it out) it appeared that the neo-Romantic would be followed by a sort of disruption or discontinuity in the historic order, which was likely to mark the beginning of a new chapter of human history, of which the watchword was destined to be "mass consciousness and age consciousness" and "the individual satisfactions of art" raised to the higher level of universal satisfaction in a setting of universal humanism.

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33. A. Bose, "Dr. B. N. Seal As a Literary Critic" in *Acharya B. N. Seal Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume*, op. cit., pp. 86-100.

34. Ibid.
35. Ian Donaldson, *Essays in criticism*, First edition.
36. B. N. Seal, *Autobiography*, Part II, Sec. 13.
37. Ibid.
38. S. N. Roy, "Acharya B. N. Seal as a Poet and a Critic", in *Acharya Brojendranath Seal Birth Centenary Volume*, op. cit., p. 62.
39. B. N. Seal, *Kuest Eternal*, London, 1936, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, p. 8.
40. B. K. Sarkar, *Hindusthan Standard, Magazine Section*, 3 September 1938, Calcutta, p. 3.

CHAPTER III

Aurobindo's Aesthetics

SRI AUROBINDO, in his appraisal of values in Indian art, virtually explained and evaluated the cardinal principle of expression in art as understood in a spiritual context. Sri Aurobindo breathed life into dogmatics. As Clendall had said of Reinhold, he becomes almost an argument for a return to faith. In Sri Aurobindo it is not merely a return but a prelude to going forward, an invitation to fresh embodiment. But Sri Aurobindo's rootedness, it has been abundantly clear, does not make a fetish of the forms of the past. That is why he is not a conservative but a Sanātana. He communicates a state of consciousness in its concrete actuality and this state of consciousness is not confined to any one sect or tradition or aspect. It is large enough to contain all variations, the entire spectrum and that is why his aesthetics has been characterised to be the aesthetics of creative harmony.¹ Aurobindo's ideal of a spiritual life and society revealed aesthetic overtones. Towards the end of *The Life Divine* we hear him say that the delight of the spirit is ever new, the forms of beauty it takes innumerable, its godhead ever young and the taste of delight *rasa* of the Infinite eternal and inexhaustible. In his view, beauty is a key to the supreme, a communion of "moved identity". It reveals the aesthetic roots of our being, justifies the world as an aesthetic experience. According to him, it is the highest reward, the equation of *Brahmasvāda* and *Rasāsvāda*. The ancient Indian concept of *ānanda* was taken to be the matrix of manifestation and the facts and the mystics could experience this *ānanda*, wherefore all things were born wherein they grow and exist and whereto they all return.² In Aurobindo's understanding of the problem, arts were considered to be a link between the visible and the invisible,

between the real and the apparent. It was shared by the Tagores. They believed that all earthly beauty revealed itself as beauty by participation in His essence. According to the Indian philosophy of worship, with which it closely allied the origin of art, the *ista devatā* or chosen form of deity is but one's own ideal self, *swarūpa*. Through the appropriate ritual or contemplation, *dhyāna* and *pūjā*, the devotee is enjoined to be as one or identified with it. Essentially it is the recovery of a lost identity: Thou art That. The image he makes and worships is at once lamp and mirror.

In the older Indian view, art was held to be conducive to freedom (*Muktipradāyī*). That it means or leads to a release from the ego and its restricting categories is a matter of immediate and universal experience. Sri Aurobindo believed this "*Citta vistāra*" to be the essential function of art. Beauty, traced to its original source, gave a non-temporal quality to human experience and reconciled the opposites. Art and beauty were the only guarantee of meaning and satisfaction (*raseṇa tṛptaḥ*) and they helped us distinguish the laws of our being from biological and economic accidents and determinants. Their real task was *ātmasaṁskṛti* and art was an aid towards the trans-valuation of values.

Aurobindo on Cousins

Sri Aurobindo while reviewing Cousins's³ *New Ways in English Literature* made some remarks which betray some of his fundamental ideas on aesthetics, basically spiritually oriented. As per the distinction of idealism and realism in art, Aurobindo refused to accept this distinction. "The cut and dried distinction between idealism and realism in literature" had always seemed to him to be "a little arbitrary and unreal and whatever its value in drama and fiction, it had no legitimate place in poetry". According to Sri Aurobindo, what we find here is a self-identification with what is best and most characteristic of a new spirit in the age, a new developing aesthetic temper and "outlook" (Aurobindo would rather substitute, "inlook" for "outlook"). Its mark has been taken to be a greater (not exclusive) tendency

to the spiritual rather than the merely earthly, to the inward and subjective than the outward and objective, to the life within and behind than to the life in front, and in its purest, which seems to be its Irish form, a preference of the lyrical to the dramatic and of the inwardly suggestive to the concrete method of poetical presentation. Every distinctive temperament has naturally the defect of an insufficient sympathy, often a pronounced and intolerant antipathy towards all that departs from its own motives.

While reviewing the book further, Aurobindo noted that contemporary criticism was beset with many dangers. There was the charm of new thought and feeling and expression of tendency which blinded us to the defects and misplaced or misproportioned to our view the real merits of the expression itself. There were powerful cross-currents of immediate attraction and repulsion which carried us far from the true track. Especially there was the inevitable want of perspective which prevented us from getting a right vision of things too near us in time. And if, in addition, Sri Aurobindo points out, one is oneself part of a creative movement with powerful tendencies and a pronounced ideal, it becomes difficult to get away from the standpoint it creates to a large critical outlook. Thus he seems to harp on the importance of aesthetic detachment in matters of literary criticism, considered as a form of creative activity.

About art being a copy of nature, Sri Aurobindo observes in the review that it is a question of realism in art. He admits that art was not a copy of nature, but, he points out, it was also true that it was not the secret object most realism, whatever it might have said about itself. Realism was in fact "a sort of nether idealism and perhaps more correctly, sometimes an inverse, sometimes a perverse romanticism which tried to get a revelation of creative truth by an effective force of presentation", by an intensity "often an exaggeration at the opposite side of the complex phenomenon of life". All art, according to Sri Aurobindo, started from the sensuous and sensible or took it as a continual point of reference or at the lowest, used it as a symbol and a "fount of images". When it

soared into invisible world, it was from the earth that it had soared. But equally all art worth the name must go beyond the visible, must reveal, must show us something that is hidden and in its total effect not reproduce but create. So this "creativity" was incompatible with the copy theory, which Aurobindo rejected in no uncertain terms. He tells us that the artist creates an ideal world of his own, not necessarily in the sense of ideal perfection, but a world that exists in the idea, the imagination and vision of the creator. More truly, he throws into significant form a truth he has seen which may be truth of hell or truth of heaven or an immediate truth behind things terrestrial or any other, but is never merely the external truth of earth. Aurobindo calls it the "ideative truth" and by it he seeks to evaluate a work of art employing it along with the "criteria of power, perfection and beauty of his presentation". Further, he tells us like Goethe that traditions are there to be overcome and transcended in art. "Lyrical motive and spirit" play a big part in this act of transcendence.

This inevitably led him to the formulation of the age-old dichotomy between "subjective vision" and "objective presentation" by the artist and he virtually effects a synthesis of the two by postulating their transcendence on a "spiritual plane", where the said difference and distinction are exceeded. But definite laws are absent and in his ideas herein Aurobindo comes close to the traditional tantric ideas on art which say that art-activity was like the flight of a bird from one tree to another which left no trace of its trail in the air. But he went a step further to suitably accommodate both this subjectivity and objectivity in art and discovered a possibility which was essentially spiritually oriented. That possibility was the discovery by Sri Aurobindo of a closer approximation to what we might call *mantra* in poetry, that rhythmic speech, which as the Vedas put it, rose at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the Truth—the discovery of the word, the divine movement, the form of thought proper to the reality, which to quote Cousins, lies in the apprehension of a something stable behind the instability of word and deed, something that is a reflection of the fundamental passion of humanity or something beyond

itself, something that is a dim foreshadowing of the divine urge which is prompting all creation to unfold itself and to rise out of its limitations towards its God-like possibilities. This "something" beyond the "empirical" of poetry leads us to the formulation of the main tenets of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy which are essentially abstruse and difficult to comprehend. But without a proper understanding of his difficult metaphysical position, a correct appraisal of his aesthetics will be an impossibility.

Aesthetic Sense and the Total Human Personality

Sri Aurobindo defines his positive idea while defining culture in his book, *The Human Cycle*. But still on the higher plane of mental life (as conceived by Sri Aurobindo), we are apt to be pursued by old exclusiveness and misunderstandings. We see that in the past there seems often to have been a quarrel between culture and conduct. Yet according to Sri Aurobindo's definition, conduct also is a part of the cultured life and the ethical ideality one of the master impulses of the cultured being. The opposition which puts on one side the pursuit of ideas and knowledge and beauty and calls that culture, and on the other the pursuit of character and conduct and exalts that as the moral life must start evidently from an imperfect view of human possibility and perfection. From the view point of Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy, neither the ethical being nor the aesthetic being is the whole man, nor can either be his sovereign principle; they are merely two powerful elements. Ethical conduct is not the whole of life; even to say that it is three-fourths of life is to indulge in a very doubtful mathematics. We cannot assign to it its position in any such definite language, but at best say that its kernel of will, character, and self-disciplined are almost the first condition for human self-perfection. The aesthetic sense is equally indispensable, for without that the self-perfection of the mental being cannot arrive at its object, which is on the mental plane the right and harmonious possession and enjoyment of the truth, power, beauty and delight of human existence. But neither can be the highest principle of the human order. We can combine them; we can enlarge

the sense of ethics by the sense of beauty and delight and introduce it to correct its tendency of hardness and austerity, the element of gentleness, love, amenity, the hedonistic side of morals. We can, according to Sri Aurobindo, steady, guide, and strengthen the delight of life by the introduction of the necessary will, austerity, and self-discipline which will give it endurance and purity. These two powers of our psychological being, which represent in us the essential principle of energy and the essential principle of delight—the Indian terms, *Tapas* and *Ānanda** are more profound and expressive—can be thus helped by each other, the one to a richer, the other to a greater self-expression. But that even this much reconciliation may come about they must be taken up and enlightened by a higher principle which must be capable of understanding and comprehending both equally and of disengaging and combining disinterestedly their purposes and potentialities. Those higher principles seem to be provided for us by the human faculty of reason and intelligent will. Our crowning capacity, it would seem to be by right the crowned sovereign of our nature. Sri Aurobindo, in another context, tells us that the awakening in man is a spiritual necessity⁴ of evolution itself, a step towards the growth of the being out of the ignorance into the truth of the divine unity and the evolution of a divine consciousness and a divine being. For much more than the mind or life which can turn either to good or to evil, it is the soul personality, the psychic being, which insists on the distinction, though in a larger sense than the mere moral difference. It is the soul in us which turns always towards Truth, Good, and Beauty, because it is by these things that it itself grows in stature. Therein resides the principle of *Ānanda*, the very principle of its delight of life is to gather out of all contacts and happenings, their secret divine sense and essence, a divine use and purpose so that by experience our mind and life may grow out of the inconscience towards a supreme consciousness, out of the divisions of the ignorance towards an integrating consciousness and knowledge.

**Ānanda* is the essential nature of bliss of the cosmic consciousness and, in activity, its delight of self-creation and self-experience.

Thus the principle of self-transcendence as involved in all forms of human activity leads to a culmination in spiritual value.

Sri Aurobindo's Metaphysical Ideas

Sri Aurobindo's defence of Indian culture consisted in presenting the eternal India which was the vision of the Divine in the course of fulfilment on the physical plane. Side by side with this stupendous activity of the wisdom aspect of his being, Sri Aurobindo gave expression to the *Ānanda* aspect through the instrumentality of poetry, rich with cosmic cadences, spiritual uplift, and enlightenment. His poems, dramas, and instalments of his major work, *Savitri*, running into fifty thousand lines embody his spiritual ideas as reflected in the creative works of the highest type. It has been claimed⁵ that for the vast abundance of material, profundity of thought, sublimity of expression, and for the glory and majesty of its soul vision, Sri Aurobindo's contribution remains unequalled in the history of human creative effort in both the East and the West. Sri Aurobindo tells us in unambiguous terms that man and the universe are, in their essential inner nature, divine; they are modes of manifestation of the One, the Eternal. Behind the appearances stands the Supreme Reality in whom all beings are united. This Supreme Being (who was *Sachidānanda*) has, by a process of self-elimination, made Himself manifest in the world of form. Matter, Life, and Mind were stages in the evolution, which was a method of His liberation from the limits of inconscience, immobility, and darkness of matter. The mind is the highest level yet reached in evolution. The evolution does not end with the emergence and the growth of the mind, it contains its ascent, its release into something greater and higher, the Supermind and the Spirit, the self-aware and self-determining power of knowledge. The next step in evolution lies in the direction of man's conscious and willed attempt to rise to the level of the Supermind and the descent of the Supermind into his mind, life, and body. Therein lie the full freedom and perfection of man. Then the mind, life, and body receive a new light and dynamics from the inner source. Their inertia and

ignorant movements are replaced by a harmonious luminous guidance from within.

Having thus defined the nature and purpose of the evolutionary process, Sri Aurobindo tells us what our approach to and ideal in the study of, these subjects (natural, biological and social sciences, and humanities) should be. Science, he says, does not exhaust the mystery of the universe by confining itself to minute examination of the physical reality. Matter is informed by and is a manifestation of, the spirit and in the development of philosophy, religion, psychology, ethics, history, economics, and other social sciences in the light of this knowledge and in a social structure raised on their foundations shall be the next stage of man's ascent and spiritual fulfilment. Education should aim to aid him in this task; poetry should be the joy of the Infinite made articulate through human terms; art should be an "act of creative knowledge, a living discovery of consciousness, a figure of truth, a dynamic form of mental and vital self-expression or world expression". According to Sri Aurobindo, the yogin's aim in the Arts should not be a mere aesthetic, mental or vital gratification but, seeing the Divine everywhere, worshipping it with a revelation of the meaning of its works, to express that one divine in Gods and men and creatures and objects. According to Sri Aurobindo, the theory that sees an intimate connection between religious aspiration and the truest and greatest Art is in essence right; but we must substitute for the mixed and doubtful religious motive a spiritual aspiration, vision, interpreting experience. For the wider and more comprehensive the seeing, the more it contains in itself the sense of the hidden Divine in humanity and in all things and rises beyond a superficial religiosity into the spiritual life, the more luminous, flexible, deep, and powerful will the Art be that springs from that high motive. So for Aurobindo⁶ Art was a realisation of something of the play of the Infinite and to that extent can be made a means of God-realisation or of divine formation. It has to be turned into a "movement of the spiritual consciousness and becomes a part of its vast quest of comprehensive illuminating knowledge".

Sri Aurobindo's idea of form as found even in the highest

type of metaphysical thinking, attributable to Aurobindo, is worth considering in an aesthetic as well as metaphysical context. He tells us that mind was an ignorance seeking after Truth but this was a self-existent Knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its "forms and forces". The manifestation has been sought to be harmonious and this leads to the concept of the integrated philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, which is equally applicable to his philosophy of art and beauty. In his *Life Divine* he tells us that all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony.⁷ They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man but impossible for the fully awakened mind to which belongs the highest type of aesthetic activity. His ideal of the spiritual religion of humanity included some "internal necessary relation"! It implied a growing realisation that there was a secret spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one. This spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression. Art, being this self-expression, is essentially spiritual in character, emanating the flavour of a unity also integral in character⁸. He discovered this unity, this totality, a comprehensive communication of harmonious parts in the structure of each *Upāṇiṣad*. The rhythm in verse or cadenced prose corresponds to the sculpture of the thought and the phrase. The material forms of the *Upāṇiṣads* are made up of four half lines each clearly cut, the lines mostly complete in themselves and integral in sense, the half lines presenting two thoughts or distinct parts of a thought that are wedded to and complete each other and the sound movement follows a corresponding principle, each step brief and moved off by the distinctness of its pause, full of echoing cadences that remain long vibrating in the inner hearing. He calls it a kind of poetry—word of vision, rhythm of the spirit. According to Sri Aurobindo, this was the rarest type of poetry not to be found elsewhere. It started in the *Upāṇiṣads*

and ended with the *Upaniṣads*. It was never within before or after.⁹ This poetry was the work of the aesthetic mind lifted up beyond its ordinary field to express the wonder and beauty of the rarest spiritual self-vision and the profoundest illuminated truth of self and God and universe. In the "Introduction" to his *Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo extols the aesthetic approach and considers it capable of bringing the individual to the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

There can be no yoga of devotion without the human God-lover, the Supreme object of love and delight and the divine use by the individual of the universal faculties of spiritual, emotional and aesthetic enjoyment.

Again he writes:

The path of Devotion aims at the enjoyment of the Supreme love and Bliss and utilises normally the conception of the supreme Lord in His personality as the divine Lover and enjoyer of the universe. The world is then realised as a play of the Lord, without our human life as its final stage, pursued through the different phases of self-concealment and self-revelation. The Principle of Bhakti yoga is to utilise all the normal relations of human life into which emotion enters and apply them no longer to transient worldly relations, but to the joy of the All-Loving, the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful.

So Aurobindo's concept of God is in consonance with the traditional idea of *Rasa vai Sah* and in Him all discords disappear. The aesthetic harmony as found in the *Upaniṣads* (the highest type of poetry, according to Sri Aurobindo) leads to a principle of love, as applied to the explanation of harmony (*Sumiti*) by Tagore in an aesthetic context. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the transcendence of the aesthetic category and its transmutation to the Divine. We may again quote him in his *Synthesis of Yoga* when he tells us:

We can see how this large application of the yoga of Devotion may be so used as to lead to the elevation of the whole range of human emotion, sensation and aesthetic perception to the divine level, its spiritualisation and the justification of the cosmic labour towards love and joy in our humanity.

Thus we find reflected in his aesthetics an integral method and an integral result. Even in the attainment of the highest Truth, the aesthetic faculty had worked and we had its evidenced in the *Upaniṣads*. We may again refer to the *Foundations of Indian Culture* wherein he discusses the possibility of the "Upaniṣads" being metaphysical in character, with a bias for "intellectual preference". But he drifts away from this position and suggests an integral approach to be the correct one in the *Upaniṣads*. To quote him:

It is because these seers saw Truth rather than merely thought it, clothe it indeed with a strong body of intuitive idea and disclosing image, but a body of ideal transparency through which we look into the illimitable, because they fathomed things in the light of self-existence and saw them with the eye of the Infinite, that their words remain always alive and immortal, of an inexhaustible significance, an inevitable authenticity, a satisfying finality, that is at the same time an infinite commencement of truth, to which all our lines of investigation when they go through to their end arrive again and to which humanity constantly returns in its minds and its ages of greatest vision.

Virtually in the *Upaniṣads*, Aurobindo discovered the image of the divine humanity, wherein the soul-vision has been amply bodied forth, implying both perfection and transcendence. To be shut up in his ego was not the perfection of man; he could become one with others, with all beings, a universal soul, one with the supreme unity. To aspire to that perfection and transcendence through his mind, reason, thought and their illuminations, his heart and its unlimited power of love and

sympathy, his will, his ethical and dynamic being, his testhetic sense of delight and beauty or through an absolute spiritual calm, largeness and peace was the high ultimate sense of Aurobindo's humanity. This was not only bodied forth in the *Upaniṣads*; it had parallels in some respect in the thoughts and ideas of the Stoics, Platonists, and the Pythagoreans. In Sri Aurobindo's integral approach, all forms of experience found a place and aesthetic experience was cognised as "necessary". Aurobindo accepted the Indian concept of "spiritual evolution" with a final spiritual perfection or transcendence as its goal. He found room in it for all human aims, activities, and aspirations. According to him, the spirit in the world assumes hundreds of forms, following many tendencies, gives many shapes to his play or *Līlā* and all are part of the mass of necessary experience.¹⁰ The claim of sense satisfaction was not ignored nor the soul's need of labour and heroic action, nor the play of emotions and aesthetic faculty. Sri Aurobindo discovered the greatness of Indian culture in this all-embracing character. In our classical literature, in the epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, this character is too pronounced to be missed. Subject to a certain principle of harmony and government (so essential for art and aesthetic activity), the whole and variegated gamut of experience got its rightful place in his integral view of life and existence.

For Sri Aurobindo, the problems of life were problems of harmony and this included art-activity. That is how Sri Aurobindo was known to be a poet of "integralism" and this "integralism" goes beyond the discovery of a special spiritual experience and vision, which may be ordinarily designated by it. By it we connote "primarily an integral style", an integral world power to match that experience and vision. But this style and this world power could not possibly be defined with the observation that the former was one which commanded with consummate versatility, diverse modes and attitudes of speech and that the latter seized articulately on all possible objects with a vivid intimacy as well as with a large sense of their interrelations within a world-harmony. We shall have to refer as well to the planes of expression: For, no matter how high or wide or

deep the state of consciousness, how supra intellectual the mystic's realisation, the poetic expression may take the mould of the mere mind's manner of utterance, the moved imaginative speech proper to the plane distinguished by Sri Aurobindo as the creative intelligence which is no more than a particular intensified operation of the same mental consciousness we find in the bulk of human activities. Poetry emanates an impact of the entire personality of the poet and that is a trend discernible in most thinkers of the period.

We noticed this trend in Rabindranath. Aurobindo's poetic integralism consisted in an expression springing straight from the highest, widest, deepest fount of spiritual experience and vision instead of getting shaped in the mere mind or even predominantly in the intermediate planes whose lights and shadows played in the known world of poetry. Aurobindo's poetically integral expression could easily be differentiated from the "grandest expressions" used even by such a great poet as Milton. We will do well to compare them for a correct appraisal¹¹ of Aurobindo's position as a poet of integralism. We may profitably quote some passages from Milton's *Paradise Lost* and some from Aurobindo's *Savitri: A Legend and Symbol*. Milton apostrophizes the Divine spirit in the *Paradise Lost*:

Thou from the first
Was present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dovelike sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
And mad'st it pregnant. (Book I: Lines 19-22)¹²

His address to the "Original Spiritual Light" ran thus:

Bright effluence of bright essence increate!
.....
Before the heavens thou wert and at the voice
of God as with a mantle didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.
(Book III: Lines 6, 9-12)¹³

We may again quote him when he spoke of the "advent of this illumination":

But now at last the sacred influence of light
appears, and from the walls of Heaven
Shoots far into the bosom of the Night
A glimmering dawn (Book II: Lines 1034-1037)¹⁴

Milton's description of the "ethereal revelation, an entrance to God's grandeur in the illumined distances" may be found in *Paradise Lost* and we may quote the relevant lines with profit:

The work as of a kingly palace-gate,
With frontis piece of diamond and gold
Embellished; thick with sparkling orient gems
The Portal shone, inimitable on Earth
By model, or by shading pencil drawn.
(Book III: Lines 505-509)¹⁵

We may now quote from *Savitri* for a possible comparison:

The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence merge.
Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite (p. 3)

.....
A long line of hesitating hue
Like a vague smile tempting a desert heart
Trouble the far rim of life's obscure sleep.
Arrived from the o'ther side of boundlessness
An eye of deity pierced through the dump deeps:

.....
Intervening in a mindless universe,
Its message crept through the reluctant hush
Calling the adventure of consciousness and joy
And, Conquering Nature's disillusioned breast

Compelled renewed consent to see and feel
 A thought was shown in the unsounded void.
 A sense was born within the darkness depths,
 A memory quivered in the heart of time.
 As if a soul long dead were moved to live: (pp. 2-3)
 Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
 A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal
 The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
 Persuaded the inert black quietude
 And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God
 A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
 That glowed along a fading moment's brink,
 Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
 A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge. (pp. 3-4)

The lines from Milton express a philosophico-religious mood conveying strongly-cut imaged ideas in a tone of exalted emotion with the help of words that have a powerful sateliness and a rhythm that has a broad sweep. But Milton's substance, as Sri Aurobindo had pointed out in a letter, is, except at certain heights, mental—mentally grand and noble¹⁶ “and his” architecture of thought and verse is high and powerful and massive, but there are usually no subtle echoes there, no deep chambers; the occult things in man's being are foreign to “his intelligence”.¹⁷ He may employ certain terms resembling Sri Aurobindo's and there is the largeness of breath which seems to make his suggestions break through the intellectual grip, yet on attending closely we miss the sheer spiritual vision going home to us with a vibrant vastness and stirring up in us as an “intuitive” sense of mystical realities. Something in the rhythm remain unsupported by the sight and the word. God, light, Infinity, Heaven do not reveal their own body as it were, and do not utter themselves in their own tongue; they are reflected in the mental imagination and given forceful speech there. But because of the rhythm the critical ear is likely to be deceived about the mostly intellectual-imaginative quality of Milton and it is with this possibility in view that Sri Aurobindo for all his admiration for the poetry of *Paradise Lost*, has warned a

disciple poet who wanted to write authentically of the Supra-intellectual: "The interference of this mental Miltonic is one of the great stumbling-blocks when one tries to write from above". What Sri Aurobindo calls "writing from above" is generally spoken of by him as "overhead poetry" and described as an inspiration that is felt in yogic experience to be descending from some ether of self-existent consciousness extended boundlessly beyond the brain-clamped human mind. This overhead inspiration can come even when one is not a practising mystic, but then it manifests like a shining accident and is a rare note. Rabindranath, while speaking of the descent of "universal humanism" (*Viśva-mānava-sattā*) on the poet, while he was writing poetry, comes close to Aurobindo's idea of "overhead poetry". "The shining accident" as explained by Sri Aurobindo is found in Milton when he wrote: "Those thoughts that wander through Eternity",¹⁸

We may note in this context that Sri Aurobindo distinguishes a fourfold gradation of the overhead planes as having acted so far in the world's literature on a few occasions: higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, and overmind. On all these planes the experience of the Infinite is automatic and there is a light of direct knowledge of the universe's fundamental being and becoming. But the light varies in intensity. The higher mind is like a broad clear day revealing through a spiritual rather than intellectual thought the divine substance and its multiform activity: it is, as it were, the archetype of the mental Miltonic, the plane active behind Milton's grand style but unable to send its own spiritual stuff of thought in an authentic shape and motion through his genius. The illumined mind is more a luminous seeing than a luminous thinking: it is a play of spiritual sight, the divine secrecies are disclosed through a crowd of colourful yet subtle images in a swift or slow design with thought as a subordinate element. Setting points out that it is the plane active behind Shakespeare's leap and coruscation and felicitous ingenuity of the life-force but mostly translated into vivid passion and sensation and idea-impulse instead of being transmitted in its multi-toned seerhood of divine values, Aurobindo's intuition was different from the Crocean intuition

or that conceived by Rabindranath and other modern aesthetic thinkers. It had a reference to the "superhuman level". For him, intuition meant a profound penetration into the essence of things by a spontaneous inner intimacy on a superhuman level. It differs from the illumined mind in that it is a flash by which divine realities bare themselves rather than are bared by a flood of illumination thrown upon them. Intuition involves the Truth-touch wherein the direct knowledge is not even complete; the whole sense of the divine being and becoming is not caught in pure identity. The entire directness is really the privilege of the supermind, the sovereign truth-consciousness that is the special dynamic of the Aurobindonian yoga, but a radiant representative of it is possessed by the overmind which is what the world has hitherto known as the extreme Godhead. Also, the overmind vision, word, and rhythm are at once intense and immense to the utmost. The line of poetry charged with them carries vastly a movement as if from everlasting to everlasting thought, image, expression, vibration bear a value and a form in which all the qualities of the other planes fuse in something diversely, ultimate and variously transfigured by an inmost oneness with the cosmic harmony and with the supracosmic mystery. The voice of the overmind is *mantra*, the eternal word spoken of and sought for by the vedic *R̥sis*. The typical work *Sāvitrī* is this general overhead atmosphere breathing one or another level either distinctly or in combination and everywhere a lift towards the *mantra*, culminating now and again in that sovereign speech itself. Like a super-existentialist, Aurobindo's Savitrī¹⁰ uses this sovereign speech to assert herself: "I am, I love, I see, I act, I will".

Herein she chose to match all fate with the nude dynamism of her heart and soul and the accent is recognisably Aurobindonian. In this grand modern epic Aurobindo succeeded because he was not only familiar both as mystic and artist with the magnitudes and intensities of our subliminal and supraliminal being, but had also endeavoured to lay on the poor dust of the outer self "the high Transcendent's sun-like hands". Man's earth-born heart was never forsaken by him and it was shown, on the one side, the misery with which it fell short of the

Infinite and, on the other, the apocalyptic fulfilment here and now that was possible to it. And the fulfilment was depicted again and again in terms which go home to us and which set task in a colossal clarity the eternal in the movements of time.

Sri Aurobindo's weltanschauung necessarily included a practical ideal of life. For an integral philosophy must be not only a statement about the nature of Reality but must also give concrete direction for the realisation of an absolute value. So he spoke of the "fulfilment" and it was so very real for him. According to Sri Aurobindo, a philosophy, the principles of which cannot be tested and proved right and true in experience, is barren. It may be brilliant in its dialectic and a marvel of system-building. But it cannot be described as integral. Like his philosophy, his aesthetics is also integral in character and in his *Savitri* and the *Last Poems* this integralism is too pronounced. In his *Last Poems* Sri Aurobindo sang the spiritual saga of the individual soul. This individual soul was the most important category in Sri Aurobindo's system of spiritual pragmatism from the point of view of the actual realisation of the implications of his metaphysic. From the aesthetic point of view, its importance could not possibly be estimated. For the individual soul was the repository of all experiences, both spiritual and non-spiritual, which got reflection in art and poetry. It was the soul that was steeped in the mire of matter; it was the soul again which rose to the supernal heights of the Divine.²⁰ In the *Last Poems* Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Soul as hearing a silver call. To it was revealed a Godhead of things to be realised. The poet's intrepid soul, armed with God's might made an assigination with the night. It was not so much a struggle, this journey through the darkness was rather a pilgrimage. The pilgrim of the night passed through a luminous abode and previsions the upward evolutionary ascent of the creative Force.²¹ From the inconscient blossomed forth the secret, sleeping, dormant consciousness, out of matter bloomed forth the divine soul. The rule of the spirit over nature first manifested itself as a change of the very sense of the poet. Hearing and sight and taste underwent a radical change. This presupposed a descent of the golden light, the supramental consciousness into the

poet's brain. The poet gradually soars into the very heart of the sun and sees the revelation of the new world to be. "New Atlantis" is discovered, where it was all harmony; it was no longer the field of opposites, the cavern of darkness and a denial of God. Thus Sri Aurobindo speaks of the realisation of Godhead and the descent of the supra-mental on individual soul through a process of aesthetic creativity. Thus like the *R̥sis* of the old and Bremond of modern times, Sri Aurobindo spoke of God-realisation through art-activity and this may be considered as an aspect of his integral philosophy. It was not syncretic but essentially integral in character. This integration excluded extremism from Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic ideas. This is discernible when he wrote on Hindu drama.²²

To the Hindu, it would have seemed a savage and inhuman spirit that could take any aesthetic pleasure in the sufferings of an Oedipus or a Duchess of Malfi or in the tragedy of a Macbeth or an Othello. Partly this arose from the divine tenderness of the Hindu nature, always noble, forebearing and gentle and at that time saturated with the sweet and gracious pity and purity which flowed from the Soul of Buddha; but it was also a necessary result of the principle that aesthetic and intellectual pleasure is the first object of all poetic art. Certainly poetry was regarded as a force for elevation as well as for charm but as it reaches these objects through aesthetic beauty, aesthetic gratification must be the whole basis of dramatic composition, all other super-structural objects are secondary.

The above-quoted lines point to a polish and poise which shun all forms of extremism and his implied reference to *Shānta rasa* and the Buddha make the point quite clear. His viewpoint is the viewpoint of totality and that is how he discovers in the ancient Hindu drama an atmosphere of romantic beauty, a high urbanity and a gracious equipoise of the feelings, a perpetual confidence in the sunshine and the flowers and considers them to be the essential spirit of a Hindu play. Pity and terror were used only to awaken the feelings but not to lacerate them and the drama was

expected to close on the note of joy and peace. Sri Aurobindo thought that it was in an art like this that the soul found the repose, the opportunity for being confirmed in gentleness and in kindly culture, the unmixed intellectual and aesthetic pleasure in quest of which it turned away from the crudeness and incoherence of life to the magic regions of art. This polished sense of proportion and coherence as found by Sri Aurobindo²³ in the Hindu mind has been considered to be responsible for the mixed aesthetic attitude to the thematic and emotive content of a drama. He tells us of a strength that shuns ostentation, a charm that is not luxuriant, not marked to the first glance and they are appreciable only to the few select minds who have chastened their natural bearings by a "wide and deep culture". The criticism of "feeble characters" in Hindu drama has been ably met by Sri Aurobindo from a higher viewpoint of aesthetic culture. He tells us that when the English scholars, fed on the exceedingly strong and often raw meat of the Elizabethans, assert that there are no characters in the Hindu drama, when they attribute this deficiency to the feebleness of inventive power which leads "Asiatic" poetry to concentrate itself on glowing description and imagery (thereby seeking by the excess of ornament to conceal poverty of substance), when even their Indian pupils perverted from good taste and blinded to fine discrimination by a love of the striking and a habit of gross forms and pronounced colours due to the too exclusive study of English poetry, repeat and reinforce their criticisms, the lover of Kalidasa and his peers need not be alarmed. He need not banish from his imagination, Sri Aurobindo asserts, with the gracious company with which it was peopled; he need not characterise "Shacountala" as an eloquent nothing or "Unvasie" as a finely-joined puppet. These dicta sprang from prejudice and were the echo of a prejudice. They were evidence "not of a more vigorous critical mind but of a restricted critical sympathy". The criticisms hurled against the Hindu drama were mostly out of context and they ignore the "whole" wherein these dramas fit in. That is why, Sri Aurobindo points out, if we expect a "Beautiful white Devil" or a "Jew of Malta" from the Hindu dramatist, we shall be disappointed. He did not deal in these splendid but horrible

masks. If we come to him for a Lear or a Macbeth, we shall go away discontented; for there also are sublimities which belong to "cruder civilisations and more barbarous national Types". Hindu civilisation was not so crude and not of that barbarous national type as to produce that sort of artistic creation. In worst crimes and utmost suffering as well as happiness and virtue, the Hindu was more civilised and temperate, less crudely enormous than the hard and earthy African peoples whom in Europe they only half moralised. Hindu art was moral in the sense of being a part of a total life, which was governed by *ṛta* and this Hindu art refused to poison the moral atmosphere of the soul by elaborate studies of human depravity. So Sri Aurobindo, true to his concept of integral philosophy, declared that the true spirit of criticism was to seek in a literature what we could find in it of great or beautiful and not to demand from it what it did not seek to give us. His reference to the world of content is too pronounced to be missed. In aesthetic judgment, Sri Aurobindo told us, the universe of discourse was all important.

Historical Method Criticised

Sri Aurobindo told us that the Hindu mind shrank not only from violence, horror, and physical tragedy—the Elizabethan stock-in-trade—but even from the tragic in moral problems which attracted the Greek mind. The problems of disease, neurosis, and spiritual medicology (which were the staple of modern drama and fiction) were excluded and not favoured in the thematic content of the ancient Hindu drama. These accidents in life had nothing to do with the essential character of man, which was spiritual in nature. This spiritual character was fundamental and the so-called facts of life, which were unrelated to this basic spiritual character of man, were accidental. They had no ultimate significance and as such they had no bearing on our aesthetic evaluation. This is basic to our traditional Indian aesthetics and that is why our great poets of ancient times did not leave any biographical or historical data. Sri Aurobindo does not cognise any importance of these historical

data and biographical particulars. While writing on Kalidasa, Sri Aurobindo notes this paucity of biographical data of the great poet and comments that "this is an exceedingly fortunate circumstance. The natural man within us rebels indeed against such a void who Kalidasa was, what was his personal as distinguished from his poetical individuality, what manner of man was the great King whose patronage he had enjoyed. Who were his friends, who his rivals and how he dealt with either or both, whether or not he was a lover of wine and women in practice as well as in imagination, under what special surroundings he worked and who were the minds by whom he was most influenced, all these the natural man clamours to know; and yet all these are things we are very fortunate not to know".²⁴

Sri Aurobindo admitted that the historical method was attractive and it led to certain distinct advantages; it decidedly aids those who are not gifted with fine insight and literary discrimination, to understand certain sides of a poet's work more clearly and intelligently. But, even though it increases our knowledge of the working of the human mind, it does not in the end assist or improve our critical appreciation of poetry; it helps us in understanding of the man and of those aspects of his poetry which concern his personal individuality but it obstructs our clear and accurate impression of the work and its value. By this "value" Sri Aurobindo means something "spiritual" and any thing accidental or belonging to the level of the vital and the material is not relevant for this spiritual value. He criticises the protagonists of this historical method in art and tells us that they put the cart before the horse and placing themselves between the shafts do a great deal of useless though heroic labour in dragging both. They insist on directing that attention to the poet which should be directed to the poem. But he was not absolutely unconcerned with the poetic individuality of the poet. For according to him it was not primary but secondary in importance. He tells us that after assimilating a man's literary work and realising its value first to ourselves and then in relation to the eternal nature and scope of poetry, we may, and indeed must—for if not consciously aimed at, it must have been insensibly formed in the mind—attempt to

realise to ourselves an idea of his poetic individuality from the data he himself has provided for us. And the idea so formed will be the individuality of the man so far as we can assimilate him, the only part of him therefore that is of real value to us. In this context Sri Aurobindo refers to the bio-data of Shakespeare as expressed through his recorded actions and his relations to his contemporaries. They are matters of history and had nothing to do with the appreciation of his poetry. The individuality of Shakespeare as expressed through his bio-data is a matter of history and had nothing to do with the reading of *Hamlet* or the *Sonnets*. On the contrary it may often come between the reader and the "genuine revelation of the poet in his work"; for, according to Sri Aurobindo, actions seldom revealed more than the outer, bodily and the sensational man while his words took us within to the mind and the reason, the receiving and the selecting part of him, which were his truer self.

Sri Aurobindo illustrates his point with further references to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. He tells us that it may matter to the pedant within us whether the *Sonnets* were written to William Herbert or to Henry Wriothesley or to William himself, whether the dark woman whom Shakespeare loved against his better judgment was Mary Filton or someone else or nobody at all, whether the language was that of hyperbolical compliment to a patron or that of an actual passionate affection; but to the lover of poetry in us, these things were of little consequence. It may be a historical fact that Shakespeare, when he sat down to write these *Sonnets* intended to use the affected language of conventional and fulsome flattery; if so, it does not exalt our idea of his character; but after all it was only the bodily and sensational case of that huge spirit which so intended—the food-sheath and the life-sheath of him, to use Hindu phraseology. But the mind, the soul which was the real Shakespeare felt as he wrote, every phase of the passion he was expressing to the very utmost, felt precisely those exultations, chills or jealousy and disappointment, noble affections, dark and unholy furies and because he felt them, he was able to express them so that the world still listens and is moved. The passion was there in the soul of the man—whether as a potential force or an experience from a past life,

matters very little—and forms therefore part of his poetic individuality. But if we allow, writes Sri Aurobindo,²⁵ the alleged historical fact to interfere between us and his individuality, the feelings with which we ought to read the *Sonnets*, admiration, delight, sympathy, rapt interest in a soul struggling through passion towards self-realisation will be disturbed by other feelings of disgust and nausea or at the best pity for a man who with such a soul within him prostituted its powers to the interest of his merely bodily covering. Both our realisation of the true Shakespeare and our enjoyment of his poetry will thus be cruelly and uselessly marred. This is the essential defect which vitiates the theory of the man and his milieu.

So Sri Aurobindo in denouncing the historical method, virtually put little premium on human action.

It is only the most sensational and therefore the lowest nature that express themselves mainly by their actions. In the case of great poets with whom expression is an instrument that answers spontaneously and accurately to the touch of the soul it is in their work that we shall find the whole of them and not only that meagre past which struggled but brokenly and imperfectly in the shape of action.²⁶

In effect he distinguished between "literary history" and "criticism" and tells us that the milieu of Shakespeare or of Homer or of Kalidasa, so far as it is important to an appreciation of their poetry, can be gathered from their poetry itself and knowledge of the history of the times would only litter the mind with facts which are of no real value as they mislead and embarrass the judgment instead of assisting it. Sri Aurobindo suggests that we should argue from the poem to the milieu and he calls it the "only fair method". According to him the historical method (i.e. from the milieu to the poem) leads to much confusion and is sometimes a veil for a "bastard impressionism" and sometimes a source of literary insincerity or at the best anaemic catholicity. The historical method is "useful only with inferior writers who, not having had full powers of expression, are more interesting than their work". He compared

the historical method to the cloven foot of science attempting to insinuate itself into the fair garden of poetry. By introducing this method into criticism, we are overloading ourselves with facts and stifling the literary field with the host of all the mediocrities more or less "historically important but at any rate deadly dull and uninspiring who at one time or another had the misfortune to take themselves for literary 'geniuses'". And just as scientific history tried to lose the individual genius into movements, so the historical method tries to lose the individual poem in tendencies. It resulted in the modern poets expressing "tendencies, problems, realisms, romanticisms, mysticisms and all the other local and ephemeral aberrations with which poetry has no business whatsoever". Whereas the poet ought to have held up before them as their ideal "the expression of the great universal feeling and thoughts which sway humanity".²⁷

This denunciation of the historical method in art looks incompatible with his concept of integral philosophy. The "physical and the vital planes" and their significance in man's spiritual life were integrated in man's total existence. While speaking of the "necessity of transformation" Sri Aurobindo²⁸ tells us that there must (also) be a realisation of the Divine in the outer consciousness and life, in the vital and physical planes on their own essential lines. He saw the necessity of a vital transformation and according to him, "an association of the spiritual consciousness with the vital" was inadequate. His aim was "the realization on the physical plane". We may refer to Sri Aurobindo's reference to Ramakrishna wherein he told us that he could not accept Ramakrishna, for Ramakrishna did not speak of "a successful meeting of the Divine and the Sadhak on physical plane". Again, in a different context, Sri Aurobindo eulogised the past and the traditions of a nation and thereby implicitly acknowledges the value of "actions". We may quote the relevant passage:

The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them

and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth, the great past ought to be followed by a greater future.²⁹

As for art's significance, he told us that a "spiritual aspiration, vision, interpreting experience"³⁰ should be inherent to make art what it is. In this context, we may refer to Sri Aurobindo's ideas of "classical" and "romantic" art. He tells us that the art-creation which lays the supreme stress on reason and taste and on perfection and purity of a technique constructed in obedience to the canons of reason and taste, claimed for itself the name of classical art; but the claim, like the too trenchant distinction on which it rests, is of doubtful validity. The spirit of the real, the great classical art and poetry, is to bring out what is universal and subordinate individual expression to universal truth of beauty, just as the spirit of romantic art and poetry is to bring out what is striking and what is individual and this it often does so powerfully or with so vivid an emphasis as to throw into the background of its creation the universal on which yet all true art, romantic or classical, builds and fills in its forms. In truth, Sri Aurobindo tell us,³¹ all great art has carried in it both a classical and a romantic as well as a realistic element—understanding realism in the sense of the prominent bringing out of the external truth of things, nor the perverse inverted romanticism of the "real" which bring into exaggerated prominence the ugly, the common or morbid and puts that forward as the whole truth of life. The type of art to which a great creative work belongs is determined by the prominence it gives to one element and the subdual of the others into subordination to its reigning spirit. But classical art also works by a large vision and inspiration, not by the process of the intellect. The lower kind of classical art and literature—if classical it be and not rather, as it often is, pseudo-classical, intellectually imitative of the external form and process of the classical, may achieve work of considerable, though a much lesser power, but of an essentially inferior scope and nature; for to that inferiority it is self-condemned by its principle of intellectual construction. Almost always, Sri Aurobindo tells us, it speedily degenerates into the

formal or academic, empty of real beauty, void of life and power, imprisoned in its slavery to form and imagining that when a certain form has been followed, certain canons of construction satisfied, certain rhetorical rules of technical principles obeyed, all has been achieved. It ceases to be art and becomes a cold and mechanical workmanship. Thus Sri Aurobindo seems to cognise here the "external truth of things" and its importance is being cognised in an aesthetic context. So being true to his concept of integral philosophy, the denunciation of the historical method in art becomes incongruous.

Aurobindo's Idea of a Syntactical Whole and Modern Semantics

Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy gave him similar ideas in aesthetics and linguistics. The idea of art being coherent in a totality was not new to Aurobindo, as his "ultimate totality" was spiritual in character. In this spiritual whole "tautologies" were incompatible and they were equally incompatible as every individual was an "unique particular". It was more evident on the aesthetic plane. On the linguistics plane the syntactic character of language as advocated by Sri Aurobindo did not admit of tautologies. He told us in no uncertain terms that there were hardly tautologies anywhere as tautologies in meaning-significance were useless. The words, though conventionally may be taken as synonymous, must be different in their word-value, involving association, sound and aesthetic beauty. For example *Saila*, *āpah* and *jala* in Sanskrit all mean water (conventionally taken) but if *jala* may be fairly represented by the common English word water and the more poetic *āpah* by "waters" or ocean according to the context, what will represent the beautiful suggestions of grace, brightness, softness and clearness which accompany *Saila*? Here we may have to go by the principle of "sound suggestion" in suggesting the differentia in meaning of the word concerned. Apart from this vexed problem of suggestiveness in words, even by conventional meanings they confuse the issue to a large extent. So precision is the first concern of a philosopher of language. For example, take the question "what does the word 'good' mean"? It is not the

same as asking "what is the meaning of the word 'good'?" nor the same as "what meaning does the word 'good' have"? Only the question raised above neither did mean "what is the sense of the word 'good'?" nor what is the significance of the word 'good'?", nor "Is the word 'good' meaningful"? Thus it is getting clearer that the problem with us is different from what was with Moore³² as he could straightaway get into the word references without coming to analyse the nature of the question raised. By a careful analysis, we may discover that the question raised is metonymical in character. Strictly speaking, "what does the word 'good' mean"? is not a question. It is not even an interrogative utterance for it is not an utterance at all.³³ It is an inscription of a type that is associated in a certain way with an interrogative utterance. The question with which we are actually concerned is one that could be asked by uttering the interrogative utterance associated with the inscription in some appropriate way in some appropriate context of utterance.

This metonymical character of language is essentially contextual in character and this is evident in the translation of a work from one language to another. We have observed that synonyms were no synonyms and they are taken to be so by convention. Images in a particular language do not fit into those of a different language. Word-references and their referents in different language-systems are at variance. We may make out our point with reference to Sri Aurobindo (a modern Indian philosopher who was not so much known for his glare for semantic studies). He clearly brings out³⁴ this metonymical character of language while he discusses the peculiar difficulties entailing the translation of delicate passages in Sanskrit to corresponding English prose or poetry.

The life and surroundings in which Indian poetry moves cannot be rendered in the terms of English poetry. Yet to give up the problem and content oneself with tumbling out the warm, throbbing Indian word to shiver and starve in the inclement atmosphere of the English language seems to me not only an act of literary inhumanity and a poor-spirited confession of failure, but a piece of laziness likely to defeat its own object. An English reader can gather no picture from, and associate no

idea of beauty with, these outlandish terms. What can be understood when he is told that the *atimukta* creeper is flowing in the grove of *kesara* trees and the mullica is sending out its fragrance into the night and the chacravaque (*cakrayaka*) is complaining to his mate amid the still ripples of the river that flows through the *jambous*? Or how does it help him to know that the scarlet mouth of a woman is like the red *bimba* fruit or the crimson *bandhul* flower? People who know Sanskrit seems to imagine that because these words have colour and meaning and beauty to them, they must also convey the same associations to their reader. This is a natural but deplorable mistake; this jargon is merely a disfigurement in English poetry. The cultured may read their work in spite of the jargon out of the unlimited intellectual curiosity natural to culture; the half-cultured may read it because of the ingrained tendency of the half-cultured mind to delight in what is at once unintelligible and inartistic. But their work can neither be a thing of permanent beauty nor serve a really useful object; and work which is neither immortal nor useful what self-respecting man would knowingly go out of his way to do?

It is interesting to note how Sri Aurobindo tried to overcome the semantic difficulties involved in the work and they reveal the metonymical character of language which in turn betrays a peculiar gestalt of its own. In the first place, a certain concession is to be made but within very narrow and guarded limits to the need for local colour, a few names of trees, flowers, birds, etc., may be transliterated into English, but only when they do not look hopelessly outlandish in that form or else have a liquid or haunting beauty of sound; a similar indulgence may be yet more freely permitted in the transliteration of mythological names. But here the license should end; a too liberal use of it would destroy entirely the idea of translation. But what was perfectly familiar in the original language must not seem entirely alien to the foreign audience; there ought to be a certain toning down of strangeness, an attempt to bring home the association to the foreign intelligence, to give it at least some idea to a cultured but not orientally erudite mind. This

may be done in many ways and we have found some of them being freely used by Sri Aurobindo.

A word may be rendered by some neologism which will help to convey any prominent character or idea associated with the thing it expresses (i.e. the referent); blossom or ruby may, for instance, render *bandhula*, a flower which is always mentioned for its redness. Or else the word itself may be dropped and the characteristic brought into prominence; for instance, instead of saying that a woman is lipped like a ripe *bimba*, it is a fair translation to write, "Her scarlet mouth is a ripe fruit and red". This device of expressingly declaring the characteristics which the original only mentions, has been frequently employed by Sri Aurobindo in the *Cloud Messenger* even when equivalent words exist in English because many objects known in both countries are yet familiar and full of common associations to the Indian mind while to the English they are rare, exotic and slightly associated or only with one particular and often accidental characteristic. In this context Sri Aurobindo remarks that it is unfortunate tendency of the English mind to seize on what seems to it grotesque or ungainly in an unfamiliar object; thus the elephant and peacock have become almost impossible in English poetry because the one is associated with lumbering heaviness and the other with absurd strutting. Contrarily the tendency of the Hindu mind, Sri Aurobindo notes, is to seize on what is pleasing and beautiful in all things and turn to see a charm where the English mind sees a deformity and to extract poetry and grace out of the ugly. The classical instances are the immortal verses in which Valmiki by a storm of beautiful and costly images and epithets has immortalised the hump of Manthara and the still more immortal passage in which he has made the tail of a monkey epic.

A kindred method, especially with mythological allusions, is to explain fully what in the original is implicit. Kalidasa, for instance, compares a huge dark cloud striding northwards from "crouncharundhra" to "the dark foot of Vishnou lifted in impetuous act to quell Bali", *Śyāmaḥ pādo baliniyamanābhyudatasyeva viṣṇoḥ*. Sri Aurobindo translates this as

Dark like the cloudy foot of the highest God

When starting from the dwarf-shape world-immense

With Titan-quelling step through heaven he strode.

It may be at once objected that this is not translation but the most licentious paraphrase. But if we accept Sri Aurobindo's original contention that the business of poetic translation is to reproduce not the exact words but the exact images, associations, and poetical beauty and flavour of the original, there is not a single word in the translation which does not represent something at once suggested to the Indian reader by the words of the text. Vishnou is nothing to the English reader but some monstrous and bizarre Hindu idol; to the Hindu He is God Himself. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, more correctly represents in English by "highest God" than by Vishnou. *Śyāmaḥ pādaḥ* is closely represented by "dark like the cloudy foot", so the word "cloudy" being necessary both to point the simile which is not apparent and natural to the English reader as to the Indian and to define the precise sort of darkness indicated by the term '*Śyāmaḥ*'; "Bali" has no meaning or association in English, but in the Sanskrit it represents the same idea as "Titan"; for the Hindu the particular name "Bali" recalls a certain theosophic legend which is almost a household word. It refers to that story of dwarf-Vishnou thrusting the mighty Bali to bottomless hell and the whole story immediately comes up before the mental eye of the Hindu as he reads Kalidasa's finely chosen words. The impetuous and vigorous term *abhyudyatasya* both in sound and sense suggests images, the sudden starting up of the world-pervading deity from the dwarf shape he had assumed while the comparison to the cloud reminds him that the second step of the three referred is to that of Vishnou striding "through heaven".

But to the English reader the words of Kalidasa literally transliterated would be a mere artificial conceit devoid of the original sublimity. The meaning content would be dwarfed and it would be largely due to the missing of appropriate images and associations. The poetical vitality and force of the original is not reproduced as the Gestaltqualität is missed and the

"whole" suffers on that account. That is how so many European Sanskritists described the poetry of Kalidasa (which is noted for its bold directness, native beauty and truth-grandeur) as the "artificial poetry of an artificial period". Sri Aurobindo tells us that a literal translation was responsible for this erroneous impression. We may further note that in the opposite method one of Kalidasa's finest characteristics is lost; his power of expressing by a single simple direct and sufficient word ideas and pictures of the utmost grandeur or shaded complexity; but this is a characteristic which could in no case be possible in any language but the classical Sanskrit which Kalidasa did more than any man to create or at least to perfect. Even the utmost literatness could not transfer this characteristic into English. This method of eliciting all the values of the original which Sri Aurobindo applied again and again, wherever a pregnant mythological allusion or a striking or subtle picture or image calls for adequate representation, more specially perhaps in pictures or images connected with birds and animals unfamiliar or but slightly familiar to the English reader. Here one may find Sri Aurobindo guilty of occasional excesses.* But he may be defended as these additions have always been suggested either by the "sound or substance of the original".³⁵ Let us quote Sri Aurobindo in point:

I may instance the line,

'A flickering line of fireflies seen in sleep.'

Kalidasa says nothing equivalent to or suggesting 'seen in sleep', but I had to render somehow the impression of night and dim unreality created by the dreamy movement and whispering assonances of the lines.

Alpālpabhāsaṁ Khadyotālivilasitanibhaṁ Vidyudunmeṣadr̥ṣṭim
With its soft dentals and its wavering and gliding liquids and sibilants unable to do this by sound I sought to do it by verbal expression, is so far made a confession of incompetence, but in a way that may perhaps carry its own pardon.³⁶

*Sri Aurobindo himself admits of this guilt.

Sri Aurobindo spoke of "yet another method", which he actually applied (though cautiously) and considered it indispensable under certain conditions. Sometimes it is necessary (at least advisable) to discard the original image altogether and replace it by a more intelligible image of the language to be translated into, which is English in the present context. Sri Aurobindo gives an example; there is no commoner subject of allusion in Sanskrit poetry than the passionate monotoned threnody of the forlorn bird who is divided at night by some mysterious law from his mate, divided it by a single lotus leaf, yet fatally divided. Such at least was the belief suggested by its cry of night to the imaginative Aryans. Nothing can exceed the beauty, pathos and power with which this allusion is employed by Kalidasa. Here, for instance, in *Shacountala*, is the way in which the lovers were gracefully warned:

'O chacravāque, sob farewell to thy mate.

The night, the night comes down to part you.

Fable as it is, one who has steeped himself in Hindu poetry can never bring himself wholly to disbelieve it. For him the melancholy call of the bird will sound for ever across the chill dividing stream and make musical with pity the huge and solemn night. But when the *yaksha* says to the cloud (in *The Cloud Messenger*) that he will recognise her who is his second life by her sweet rare speech and her loveliness in that city of happy lovers, "sob like a lovely chacravaque with me her comrade far away", the simile has no pathos to an English mind and even when explained would only seem "an artificially common to the court-poetry of the Sanskrit age". On this ground Sri Aurobindo might have been justified by the slightness of the allusion in translating "Sob like a widowed bird when all the nests are making", which translates the idea and the emotion while suggesting a slightly different but related image. The principles as explained above may be supplemented by the dictum of the closeness of word-value (not oneness of word-meaning) involving elements of association, sound and aesthetic beauty.

The foregoing observations unequivocally point to a gestalt of a particular language wherein the reference, both emotive and cognitive and a consequent transformation of the referent and a peculiar type of coherence (*Samavāya*) obtaining between them, are too pronounced to be missed. Apart from the broad gestalt of the language, the sentence-formation of a particular type in a given language gives one type of meaning, while a different formation would give an altogether different meaning. The semantic character is absolutely dependent on the syntactic character. We have seen how syntactic character of a language could change the semantics of a word and Sri Aurobindo has illustrated this point with reference to translation work from Sanskrit to English, word-image of a Sanskrit word how to be transformed to suit the syntactic requirement when translated into English. Again the same word when read in an ethical context means one thing and when in an aesthetic context means quite another. Let us illustrate:

(i) That painting is good

(ii) George is good.

Here in both the sentences "good" has been a predicative adjective but its "references" are quite different. The universe of discourse being quite disparate, "good" in (i) and (ii) is quite distinctive in meanings. Here not only the sentences as such, their construction and syntax determine the meaning of "good" but axiological discrimination is also involved therein. Apart from this axiological involvement a sentence ought to determine the meaning of "good" with reference to its position in a sentence. "Good" is traditionally said to be an adjective but the traditional term "adjective" is not a term to be taken too seriously. An adjective in traditional grammar is said to be a word that modifies a noun, whereas a noun is said to be a word with a certain reference; thus a cross classification is involved a confusion of syntactic and semantic factors. The semantic function of adjectives becomes indeterminate as the class of adjectives (as understood by me) is not a well-defined class.³⁷ The naive supposition that an attributive adjective serves to characterise the reference of the noun construction (of course, if it had any referent) is easily shown to be false; e.g. to refer to an "utter fool", "a perfect

stranger", "a complete idiot" is not to refer to anything having the characteristic of being "utter", "perfect" or "complete".

Traditional English grammar does not cognise the changing position of the adjectives as influencing the meaning of the adjective concerned. The classification of adjectives in traditional English grammars as attributive appositives and predicative adjectives does not throw much light on the nature of the function of adjectives since it is based simply on the position of the adjective in a sentence regardless of whether or not the position can be altered by syntactic transformations. And the other important defect in traditional grammar with respect to adjectives concerns³⁸ the operation of modification; an attributive adjective is said to modify the noun it is in construction with. But that obscures the fact that there is an important difference between "blue" in "He is a blue little man" and "blue" in "He is a little blue man". This difference is not indicated in saying that in each case "blue" is an attributive adjective modifying "man". Notice that the ambiguity of "He is blue" indicating either colour or sadness, is related to the fact that "He is blue" may be a derivative of either, "He is a little blue man" or "He is a blue little man". Again the attribution and predication problems as involved in adjectives in English are worthy of cognition in this context. It has been rightly pointed out in a well-documented article that the traditional relative-clause transformation failed to account for many if not most instances of attributive adjectives.*

However one contention would be that a predicative adjective modifies the complete syntactic subject it is in construction with and the adjective is determined in turn, in its meaning and significance by the position it occupies in the syntactic whole. Sri Aurobindo made this point amply clear and his reference was not only to adjectives but to nouns as well. Let us revert to our old example of "good painting" wherein "good" modified painting. In sentence (1) "That painting is good", modifies not painting "but that painting". Thus the attributive adjective may

*For a detailed study see Dwight Bolinger's, "Adjectives in English: Attribution and Predication" in *'Lingua'*, Vol. 18; No. 1.

be taken to modify the constituent it is in construction with. Thus "good" in (2) "That is a good bright painting" modifies not "painting" but "a bright painting". On the other hand "bright" in (2) modifies "a painting". (The difference between "blue" in "He is a blue little man" and "blue" in "He is a little blue man" is then that in the former case "blue" modifies a "little man" whereas in the latter case it simply modifies a "a man". To say that in each case "blue" modifies "man" would be to introduce an ambiguity.) "Good" not only modifies other elements but the constructions it enters into are often modified and "good" itself is often modified directly. Thus a construction that "good" enters into in (3) "That is a real good table", viz., a good "table" is modified by "real". "Good" itself is directly modified in (4) "That is good enough", by "enough"; by "for you" in (5) "That is good for you"; and by the comparative affix "er" in (6) "That is better". For better in (6) is analysable as "good+er".

Again let us consider the two remarks:

(7) This is a good strawberry

(8) This is a good lemon

Suppose that we suppose that for (7) to be true what is in question must be sweet or if not sweet then at least not sour. Whereas for (8) to be true we suppose that what is in question must be sour. Consequently (7) and (8) would suggest contradictions. But consider:

(9) This is a good carving knife.

If we suppose that a good carving knife must be sharp, but that a good strawberry need be neither sharp nor not-sharp, (7) and (9) would suggest independent conditions.

Utterance (7) contrasts with "This is a (good) strawberry", ["Sour" and (8) contrasts with "This is a (good) lemon"] "sour". If "good" does not differ in meaning in each case then we can expect the relevant difference between "This is a good strawberry" and "this is a sour strawberry", to be identical or virtually identical with the relevant difference between "This is a good lemon" and "This is a sour lemon". But if we suppose that for (8) to be true what is in question must be sour, whereas for (7) to be true what is in question must not be sour, it then

followed that there may be little difference between "This is a good lemon" and "This is a sour lemon"; but there is bound to be a considerable difference between "This is a good strawberry" and "This is a sour strawberry". Consequently we must either say either that, (8) cannot be associated with it the condition of being sour or that (7) cannot have associated with it the condition of not being sour or that "good" in (7) differs in meaning from "good" in (8).

The ambiguity with regard to "good" may be discovered in other adjectives such as "heavy". "A heavy car" and a "A heavy pencil" illustrate the point at issue. If we consider some other examples of the use of "good"* (as a modifier, e.g. in combination with a noun in an endocentric construction), the problem of expounding the meaning of "good" would appear to be that of saying how it modifies whatever it does modify. Or to put the matter in another way, "good" (or for that matter, any high ranking adjective) can be thought of as analogous to a numerical function while the various elements that it modifies can be thought of as so many arguments to the function yielding different values in different cases. The problem then is, as it were to state the rule whereby one passes from the argument to the value of the function for the given argument. A great deal of contemporary philosophy has been concerned with the fruitless task of attempting to correlate a single word with types of situations, or with episodes, events and occurrences, actions and so forth that occur either in the context of utterance or elsewhere in the "world". This has resulted in the classification of words as "evaluative", "descriptive", "prescriptive", "performative", etc. All these classifications are of doubtful value. Words and the world do not connect in any such direct fashion. This leads to the ambiguity and suggestions to diverse directions from a simple expression in language. Language without a definite world or reference to be cognised by the speaker and the spoken leads to confusion as we find in Arthur Edmod's (1908) absurd play *Professor Tarane*; Eugene Eunesco's

*See 'Semantic Analysis' by Paul Ziff, pp. 200-247, for a detailed study of such examples.

(1951) absurd play *The Lesson* is more to the point. Semantic difficulties in referring to the self-same referent cause may be our embarrassments in life and this is evident in the absurd play under notice. Eunesco himself referred to his play *Rhinoceros* (1958) and said: "When you can no longer make yourself understood by them, one has the impression of being confronted with monsters-rhinos, for example". Now we may ask once again: why this inadequacy of words? Is it really there?

Korzybski's theory of abstraction points unequivocally to this inadequacy of words. It was the considered opinion of many³⁹ that the topic of abstractions was of crucial importance in any systematic semantics. The world seems full of objects and relationships which cannot be adequately described in words; nor is this merely a deficiency of vocabulary—an absence of enough names to be used. Korzybski's neurological standpoint gives us an "apple" which is just a "relation between the external physical event and the reactions in the nervous system of the person who perceives that apple". He⁴⁰ further tells us that if we use a language of adjectives and subject-predicate forms pertaining to "sense" impression, we are using a language which deals with entities inside our skin and characteristics entirely non-existent in the outside world. Thus the events outside our skin are neither cold nor warm, green nor red, sweet nor bitter, but these characteristics are manufactured by our nervous system inside our skins, as responses only to different energy manifestations, physico-chemical processes. When we use such terms, we are dealing with characteristics which are absent in the external world, and build up an anthropomorphic and delusional world non-similar in structure to the world around us. So Korzybski's account does speak of the "word" and the "reference" and the "referent" and is hardly of much sequence except that this whole complex looks like the Kantian "thing-in-itself". However, we may also profitably recall Richard-Ogden's triangle of "Symbol—Reference—Referent" as suggesting an indirect relation between the three. Consequently we do not accept any rigid syntactic classification as Ryle's "achievement" and "task"

verbs.⁴¹ It is simply an approximation to the verb aspects of Slavic grammar; such aspects as momentaneous, durative, continuative, inceptive, cessative, iterative, resultative, durative, inceptive. We do not also agree to the suggestion that there is a significant correlation between the uttering of "good" and the act of commending in the sense of a necessary invariable relation. The utility of a word or phrase may be said to be varying with the strength of its correlation with a particular social situation, action, event and so forth; the language-gestalt is also very important in this context. They have been regarded by some as "context of utterance" and this context of utterance determines the conditions of answering to certain interests associated with "good". Now the question of "whose interests" leads to the problem of the syntactic whole which determines the meaning of the constituent words. The attitude to the "intrinsically good" is essentially rooted in a difference in persons, a difference of sensibility and of interests. We might tentatively conclude that apart from certain minor, derivative, or deviant cases "good" may mean answering to "certain interests" which are included in the syntactic whole. And this concept of the whole gave the primary meaning to the word and its suggestiveness or *Vyanjanā* was also determined by it. That point was ably brought out by Sri Aurobindo and he is quite in keeping with the trends of thought in modern semantics, so ably reflected in the writings of modern writers such as Cummings. Old day precision wrought by conventional grammar has not been much sought for as new modes of building up this "syntactic wholes" responding to some definite interests were found out. Punctuation, and its known laws were considered inadequate for this image of the poet and he used symbols not conforming to the dotted lines of conventional images. To complete his own image he sometimes breaks a word and "scatters" it all over the phrase to make the whole "suggestive": "SP RIN, k, Line an instant with Sunlight". It has been called "Typographical Onomtopoeia". He refuses to accept grammar as such and writes all ungrammatical sentences to make the "whole" more pronounced. To take some of his expressions:

- (1) With up so floating many bells down'
(with so many bells floating up and down)
- (2) Shining this our now must come to then
(Our shining present must come to an end).
- (3) i thank you God for most this amazing a day:
for the leaping greenly spirits of trees and a
blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

For the sake of "suggestiveness" as working through a complete image, words were often broken arbitrarily and an image was inserted to give it a semblance of "totality". For example Cummings writes "Loneliness" as "L (a leaf falls) oneliness". The individual character-pattern of language (independent of sounds) has thus been further individualised in words and phrases used therein. So the insistent demands on the word-meaning have been gradually shifting to the meaning of the total sentence, and in some cases even beyond it, thus giving a new dimension and meaning to the age-old concept of a grammatical sentence.

Thus the modern semantic predicament takes us back to ancient Indian semantics. Cumming's "scattering" of words, Sri Aurobindo's notion of an *a priori* language-frame and all the other devices (such as using small "i" for "I" as is found in Cummings and others) suggest that an "objective meaning" as sought to be conveyed through a language-symbol is an *a priori* idea and this is inherently related to a particular language-gestalt. The Indian grammarians were careful enough to distinguish between *prakṛta-dhvani* and *Vaikṛta-dhvani*, the former being a pattern of the permanent *varṇa-s* (analogous to the modern phoneme) and the latter being *dhvani*. The *Naiyāvikas* considered the former as a class (*jati*) of which the latter was an instance. Bhartṛhari's enunciation of the *sphoṭa* doctrine makes the word-meaning situation all the more clearer. According to his analysis, first, we have the actual sounds of the words uttered: this was known as *vaikṛta dhvani*. They revealed the permanent *prakṛta-dhvani* (which was taken to be an abstraction from the various *vaikṛta-dhvani-s*) or the linguistically normal

form devoid of the personal variations which were linguistically irrelevant. The third stage was the *sphoṭa* which was the whole utterance considered as an integral unit, as an indivisible language-symbol. It is this *sphoṭa* that reveals the meaning which is in the form of an intuition. Strictly both the *sphoṭa* and the meaning are different aspects of the same speech-principle. Bhartṛhari synthesised all these various aspects of speech with the threefold nature of the revelation of speech: *Paśyanti*, *madhyamā*, and the *vaikharī* stages corresponding respectively to *sphoṭa*, *prākṛta-dhvani*, and *vaikṛta-dhvani*. Divested of all the metaphysical elements, the *Sphoṭa* doctrine advocated by Bhartṛhari emphasised the importance of considering the sentence as an indivisible integral language symbol and this sentence is complete in its own overall language-structure. The "sentence" in one language loses its character when transported to the framework of another language and this was emphasised by Bhartṛhari and Sri Aurobindo and was arrived at by some modern linguists through a process of analysis. We may recall with profit the experiment conducted by Lawson on translation work.⁴² The experiment speaks of interference with the "output" language when the irrelevant message is considered capable of interfering with the "gestalt" of the "output" language. Lawson's findings indirectly corroborate what Bhartṛhari postulated long ago and was reaffirmed by Sri Aurobindo in the recent past.

So we may say in the light of the above discussion that for Sri Aurobindo art was:

- (1) a syntactic whole invested with a sort of unique individuality; the characterlogy of art-symbol reveals this uniqueness.
- (2) an inviolable unity whose cognitive and emotive meaning whose socio-cultural significance presupposed some *a priori* notion which guaranteed this unity.
- (3) integral to man's total experience, which included those on the spiritual as well as on the physical and the vital planes.

Art and the Spiritual Value

Sri Aurobindo's observations in point [in conception with (3)] may be quoted here.⁴³ This is in reference to his paramount

consideration for spiritual value, which was the crown of all human experience.

Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true super-manhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which Science tells us, that we have issued.

Thus the "glories" of spiritual "experience" were the end which all human experiences including the aesthetic would lead to. According to him, the spiritual aim in society will regard man not as a mind, a life and a body but as a soul seeking for divine fulfilment upon earth and not only in heavens beyond, which after all it need not have left if it had no divine business here in the world of physical vital, and mental nature. This spiritual aim of man holds sacred all human acts and seen in the instruments for a growth towards a diviner living. Sri Aurobindo in fact referred to all the different parts of man's life which correspond to the parts of his being, physical, vital, dynamic, emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual which found their meaning and significance in this spiritual value. Each part of man's being has its own "dharma" which it must follow and it will follow in the end. Sri Aurobindo told us that the "dharma" of science, thought, and philosophy was to seek for truth by the intellect dispassionately, without prepossession and prejudgement, with no other first propositions than the law of thought and observation itself imposed. Science and philosophy were not bound to square their observations and conclusions with any current ideas of religious dogma or ethical rule or aesthetic prejudice. In the end, if left free in their action, they would find the unity of Truth with Good and Beauty and God and would give these a greater meaning than any dogmatic religion or any formal ethics or any narrower aesthetic idea

could give us. But meanwhile, Sri Aurobindo admits, they may be left even to deny God and good and beauty of the will, if their sincere observation of things so points them. For all these rejections must come round in the end of their circling and return to larger truth of the things they refuse, often we find atheism both in individual and society a necessary passage to deeper religious and spiritual truth: one has sometimes to deny God in order to find him; the finding is inevitable in the end of all earnest scepticism and denial. The same law, according to Sri Aurobindo, held good in art. The aesthetic being of man rises similarly on its own curve towards its diviner possibilities. The highest aim of the aesthetic being is to find the Divine through beauty; the highest Art is that which by an inspired use of significant and interpretative form unseals the doors of the spirit. But in order that it may come to do this greatest thing largely and sincerely, it must first endeavour to see and depict man and Nature and life for their own sake, in their own characteristic truth and beauty; for behind these first characters lies always the beauty of the Divine in life and man and Nature and it is through their just transformation that what was at first veiled by them has to be revealed. The dogma that art must be religious or not be at all, is a false dogma, just as is the claim that it must be subservient to ethics or utility or scientific truth or philosophic ideas; Sri Aurobindo tells us definitely that art may make use of these things as elements, but it has its own *svadharma*, essential law and it will rise to the widest spirituality by following its own natural lines with no other yoke than the intimate law of its own being.⁴⁴

'Essence of Poetry'

Now we may try to understand what Sri Aurobindo thought of the nature of poetry and its essential laws (if there be any). How could we possibly use it as the "mantra of the Real", wherein lay the ultimate significance of all poetry and art. Sri Aurobindo while trying to understand poetry in this sense tells us that in this difficult task we needed "some guiding intuitions" which would facilitate a "proper description" and not a definition

of poetry. This position of Sri Aurobindo refers to the "ultimacy" of the Spiritual values which were the ultimate significance of all true poetry. By spirit he meant *Satyam*, *Sundaram* and *ānandam* and his idea of spiritual significance of art signified a locus of all the three. This spirituality in art was not identical with "religiosity" in art. He tells us:⁴⁵

Spirituality is a wider thing than formal religion and it is in the service of spirituality that Art reaches its highest self-expression. Spirituality is a single word expressive of three lines of human aspiration towards divine knowledge, divine love and joy, divine strength and that will be the highest and most perfect Art, which, while satisfying the physical requirements of the aesthetic sense, the laws of formal beauty, the emotional demand of humanity, the portrayal of life and outward reality, as the best European Art satisfies these requirements, reaches beyond them and expresses inner spiritual truth, the deeper not obvious reality of things, the joy of God in the world and its beauty and desirableness and the manifestation of divine face and energy in phenomenal creation.

This spirituality, Sri Aurobindo discovered in Indian art and according to him herein lay the excellence of Indian art, which European critics like Archer could not very well discover. Being an advocate of integral philosophy and believing in the ultimate spiritual essence of things, he did not restrict or limit the content of art to any artificial limits. His prescription is not restrictive. He does not speak of any "selected or embellished nature" as the probable content of art. Nor does he consider the "ideality" in human nature or character to be preferred to the baser elements in man as the possible content of art. His poignant observation in point is: "What nature is, what God is, what man is, can be triumphantly revealed in stone or on canvas".⁴⁶

So herein Sri Aurobindo comes close to contemporary thinking on art and aesthetics both in India and abroad. The non-restricted character of art-content necessarily leads us to postulate the ideas of the "intellectual value or art" and the

"emotional value of art". Sri Aurobindo very rightly pointed out that the supreme intellectual value of art was not sufficiently recognised. He told us of the double character of intellectual activity, divided between the imaginative, creative, and sympathetic or comprehensive intellectual centres on the one side and the critical, analytic and penetrative on the other. The latter are best trained by science, criticism and observation, the former by art, poetry, music, literature, and the sympathetic study of man and his creations. In this context, Sri Aurobindo tells us, that the first and the lowest use of art was the purely aesthetic, the second was the intellectual or educative, the third and highest was the spiritual. By speaking of the aesthetic use as the lowest, Sri Aurobindo does not propose to imply that it is not of immense value to humanity, but simply to assign to its comparative value in relation to the higher uses. The aesthetic is of immense importance and until it has done its work, mankind is not really fitted to make full use of Art on the higher planes of human development.

In this context, Sri Aurobindo refers to Aristotle and his concept of "Katharsis" is cited as a parallel to the idea of "*Cittaśuddhi*", as understood in traditional Indian thought.

According to Sri Aurobindo, Aristotle assigned a high value to tragedy because of its purifying effect. Katharsis was a sacramental word of the Greek mysteries, which in the secret discipline of the ancient Greek "Tantrics" answered precisely to our Indian concept of *Cittaśuddhi* the purification of the *Citta* or mass of established ideas, feelings, and actional habits in a man either by *Samyama*, rejection or by *bhoga*, satisfaction, or both. According to Sri Aurobindo, Aristotle was speaking of the purification of feelings, passions and emotions in the heart through imaginative treatment in poetry but the idea contained was of much wider application and constituted the justification of the aesthetic side of art. It purifies by beauty and the complete image of beauty was apprehended through intuition. As such we may note before we conclude this discussion, his ideas on intuition, which in turn would help us understand his spiritually oriented ideas of art and beauty.

Intuition Explained

Spiritually-oriented idea of art, as we find in Sri Aurobindo, leads us to the concept of intuition as understood by him. Intuition, for him, always stood veiled behind our mental operations. Intuition brought us those brilliant messages from the unknown which were the beginnings of his higher knowledge. It gave us that idea of something behind and beyond all that we know and seem to be. Intuition was thought to be as strong as Nature herself from whose very soul it had sprung and cared nothing for the contradictions or reason or the denials of experience. What the Intuition tells us of is not so much Existence as the Existent, for it proceeds from that one point of light in us which gives it its advantage, that sometimes opened door in our own self-awareness. But Intuition by the very nature of its action in men, working as it does from behind the veil, active principally in his more unenlightened, less articulate parts, served in front of the evil, in the narrow light which is our waking consciousness, only by instruments that are unable fully to assimilate its messages. Intuition is unable to give us the truth in that ordered and articulated form which our nature demands. Before it could effect any such completeness of direct knowledge in us, it would have to organise itself in our surface being and take possession there of the leading part. But in our surface being, it is not the Intuition,⁴⁷ it is the Reason which is organised and helps us to order our perceptions, thoughts, and actions. Therefore, in Aurobindo's view, the age of intuitive knowledge, represented by the early vedantic thinking of the *Upaniṣads* had to give place to the age of the rational knowledge. Intuitive thought, which was a messenger from the superconscient and therefore our highest faculty, was supplanted by the pure reason which was only a sort of deputy and belonged to the middle heights of our being. In the *Upaniṣads* wherever there is the appearance of a controversy, it is not by discussion, by dialectics, or by the use of logical reasoning that it proceeds but by a comparison of intuitions and experiences in which the less luminous gives place to the more luminous. Nowhere in the *Upaniṣads* do we

find any trace of logical reasoning. Intuition, the sages seem to have held, must be corrected by a more perfect intuition.

It would be interesting to note how Sri Aurobindo countered Archer's objections regarding intuition in art, as understood by the Indian traditional thinking on art. Archer told us that Havelt's coupling of the master intuition of Buddha with the great intuition of Newton was unjustified and according to him, they belonged to two different orders of knowledge, one scientific and physical, the other mental or psychic, spiritual or philosophic in nature. He thought that Newton's intuition was only the last step in a long intellectual process while the intuitions of Buddha had no basis in any intellectual process of any kind or any verifiable experience. As against this ill-informed criticism of Archer Sri Aurobindo⁴⁸ pointed out the conclusions of Buddha (and other Indian philosophers including the authors of the *Upaniṣads* whose spiritual experiences were enlightened by intuition and gnosis) were preceded by a very acute scrutiny of relevant psychological phenomena and a process of reasoning which though certainly not rationalistic, was as rational as any other method of thinking. Archer clinched his refutation by the sage remark that these intuitions which he chose to call fantasies contradict one another and therefore, it seems, had no value except their vain metaphysical subtlety. Sri Aurobindo's convincing pointer to Archer is:

Are we to conclude that the patient study of phenomena, the scrupulous and rigidly verifiable intellectual reasonings and conclusions of Western scientists have led to no conflicting or contradictory results?

By way of a possible answer Sri Aurobindo tells us that one could never imagine at this rate that science of heredity is torn, by conflicting fantasies or that Newton's fantasies about space and gravitational effect on space are at this day in danger of being upset by Einstein's fantasies in the same field. It is a minor matter that Archer happens to be wrong in his idea of Buddha's intuition when he says that he would have rejected a certain Vedantic intuition, since Buddha neither accepted nor

rejected but simply refused at all to speculate on the supreme cause. His intuition, Sri Aurobindo points out, was confined to the cause of sorrow and the impermanence of things and the release by the extinction of ego, desire and *sanskāra* and so far as he chose to go his intuition of this extinction, *Nirvāṇa* and the Vedantic intuition of the supreme unity were the seeing of one truth of spiritual experience, seen no doubt from different angles of vision and couched in different intellectual forms, but with a common intuitive substance. The rest was foreign to Buddha's rigidly practical purpose. Is it necessary to point out that a power of mind or spirit may be the same and yet act differently in different fields? Or that a certain kind of intuition may be prepared by a long intellectual training, but that does not make it a last step in an intellectual process, any more than the precedence of sense activity makes intellectual reasoning a last step of sense-perception? The reason overtops sense and admits us to other and subtler ranges of truth, the intuition similarly overtops reason and admits us to a more direct and luminous power of truth. But very obviously, Sri Aurobindo points out in the use of the intuition the poet and artist cannot proceed precisely in the same way as the scientist or the philosopher. Leonardo da Vinci's remarkable intuitions in science and his creative intuitions in art started from the same power but the surrounding or subordinate mental operations were of a different character and colour. And in art itself there are different kinds of intuition. Shakespeare's seeing of life differs in its character and aids from Blazac's or Ibsen's but the essential part of the process, that which makes it intuitive, is the same. The Buddhistic, the Vedantic seeing of things may be equally powerful starting points for artistic creation, may lead one to the calm of Buddha or the other to the rapturous dance or majestic stillness of Shiva and it is quite indifferent to the purposes of art to which of these the metaphysician may be inclined to give a logical preference. Sri Aurobindo concludes that because Archer ignored these elementary notional distinctions and failed to have correct appraisal of aesthetic intuition, as understood by the Indians, he could not understand the characterology of Indian art.

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CHAPTER IV

Abanindranath's Aesthetics

IN this chapter we propose to present and examine some of the salient aesthetic concepts as conceived by Abanindranath Tagore and formulated in his writings on aesthetics. Our attempt has been to rediscover them in his paintings. The task has not been very easy. For, of the two groups of writing on aesthetics, as was classified by George Santayana, Abanindranath's exact position was in the second group and as such it was rather difficult to make a rounded system out of what he wrote and said on different occasions. His ideas on aesthetics were considered to be of great significance by many and this importance could easily be acknowledged when we discover that through his writings and observations on the nature of art-activity he wanted "to recall those fundamental aesthetic feelings, the orderly extension of which yields sanity of judgement and distinction of taste". For, Abanindranath was known to be the father of modern Indian art movement. As a social being he had his traditions and lineage; as an artist he had them as well. The East and the West converged on him and made him what he was as an artist. His aesthetic ideas were also syncretic in nature. He had parallels in Buddhaghosa, the well-known commentator of the fifth century and in many others including Aristotle and Anāndavardhana. As an artist, he was a sort of a confluence. But his genius got all these artistic and aesthetic traditions fused in him and as such his art-creations and aesthetic ideas reached heights which claimed originality. So he was syncretic both in his artistic creations and in his formation of aesthetic ideas. Both the East and the West had their influences on him and as a result, he could imbibe all that was noble and fine in both the hemispheres. Old Indian traditions inspired him. Curiously

enough, a westerner, E. B. Havell, initiated him into the mysteries of ancient Indian art. He could also enter into the excellence of Chinese and Japanese art and did not hesitate to follow them in some of his sketches and drawings. The Japanese savant and artist, Okakura, made a deep impression on his mind. His association with this man from the land of the rising sun, helped him a great deal in understanding the true spirit of Japanese art. The visiting Japanese artists Taikwan and Hisida furnished him with the technique of the repetitive *colour wash* that was to become thereafter the hall mark of the Bengal school. The most striking effects of the Japanese influence on his work are a spatial quality, a breadth of pattern, and an organic simplicity.

Abanindranath also found good guides in Gilherdi and C. L. Palmer. Palmer taught him the technique of oil-painting. Abanindranath had a relation of anti-thesis (if we could use the word in the sense of opposition in the aesthetic field) to Ravi Verma, the popular Indian artist in the last decade of the nineteenth century. His paintings (issued in brilliant oleograph) used the Western technique and according to some, "the Western attitude as well". Ravi Verma appeared not to have had any knowledge and idea of the earlier art of India, including even that of South India itself. His paintings were invested with an element of "theatricality and imitative quality" which resulted in the "violent oscillation from phenomenal popularity to an almost general condemnation", in so far as the aesthetic evaluation of his works were concerned.¹ Abanindranath sought to steady the tilting equilibrium and dispel the confusion, gripping the contemporary Indian mind. He headed the new movement in art in the twentieth century India. In the words of R. V. Leyden:

The early years of this century saw the first big and effective protest against the deplorable corruption of India's arts. The small band of pioneers round Abanindranath Tagore opened their eyes and minds wide to all sorts of impressions. Not only did they turn back to the traditional arts of India—rather in their awakening national enthusiasm they lifted them

to their hearts—but they also learned from the arts of further Asia and from the modern movement in Europe.²

Syncretism in His Art

Thus, many an artistic tradition mingled at the confluence of a noble soul and that was Abanindranath's. He sucked at the breast of the universal muses of fine arts and became a "Syncrete" in the true sense of the term. He absorbed all those influences and made them his own and in turn overgrew them. His talents curved and shaped them into his own. Thus Abanindranath was not a "revivalist" in the strict sense of the term. The technique of Abanindranath got its ingredients from Mughal, Japanese, and European traditions. The technique of the master was of the realistic type. But this realism cannot be considered to belong to the British academic type nor to the Japanese type nor even to the Mughal type. It is a brand of realism absolutely his own. It may be linked up by some stretch of imagination with the exalted realism of the classical Indian epics and that linking up we have attempted in the page to follow. We might say that he presented the decorative form of the Mughal School with all its meticulous delicacy in a light more real and the technique he adopted for this purpose did not belong to any specific tradition. Nor was he the founder of any tradition in painting. He only evolved a new style. The problem of absorbing the Western technique without detriment to the character of their own art-tradition, has been a serious one to the modern artists, not only in India but also in China and Japan. The success with which Tagore solved this problem is the index of his great craftsmanship. (And according to him, talents could be found even amongst the craftsmen.)

Before Abanindranath, both the Indian and European styles of painting remained static and in him, for the first time, they found a common home and got fused into the genius of the artist and became a living force. We may note in passing that Tagore broke away from the decorative extravagance of the flickering Delhi and Patna schools, degenerate in their lifeless conventions. He kept away, with precocious vision, from the

banal academicism of Western art and its seductive realism. But his works never showed up some style absolutely indigenous and Indian in character. That is why some people found an anomaly in his writings on art and his art-creations. In his book *Bhārat Śilper Śaḍaṅga*³ he pleads for an Indian ideal of art. But in practice, he was alleged not to have adhered to it. But our submission will be that although he never adhered to any of the pure Indian art-styles (as we know that he was a syncretist in this regard), he followed unwittingly the aesthetic ideals as found in our classics. So in a way he had been unknowingly following our aesthetic ideals although he never made a fetish of any idol. As a teacher he rightly sought to lead the minds of his pupils to the work of imagination and idea. Yet he did not dictate the mode of expression. The master was not all slow to rescind any such dictation to his pupils if ever held out to any one through inadvertence.* He did not consciously follow any ideal, national or otherwise, while creating his works. But man does not live in vacuum. His social context gives him certain ideas. In Tagore we find as well some such contemporary aesthetic ideas quite convincingly linked up with the traditions in which he was placed by birth and training. Thus, Coomaraswamy discovered in Tagore a type of "Indianness" although according to him, Tagore was influenced by the European and Japanese styles. Tagore in his formulation of the idea of "imitation in art" came close to Mammata and Aristotle on the one hand and to George Santayana on the other (in formulating a type of aesthetic hedonism, which was peculiar to him). Again, his concept of the identity of truth and beauty (which we found in Keats and others) brings him close to such modern thinkers like Neurath and Hempel, who formulated the syntactic concept of truth. Thus Tagore may be said to approximate many in his aesthetic ideas and at the same time striking an original note of his own. In this context Tagore's appraisal by Coomaraswamy is relevant to the point. We may quote him when he speaks of Tagore's paintings: "Their significance lies

*Reference to Abanindranath's suggestions re: *Umār Tapasyā* to his disciple Nandalal Bose.

in their distinctive Indianness. They are, however, by no means free from European and Japanese influence".

Thus what is meant by "tradition in which he was placed by birth and training" has been specified by Coomaraswamy as "Indian", "European" or "Japanese" influence. How Tagore could get fused in him all these different techniques is a matter of anybody's guess. O. C. Gangoly, the noted art-critic, calls it a "mysterious fusion". The leading traits of his wonderful miniatures are an intensely romantic and lyrical quality and a dreamy and mystic treatment of his subjects which lift them to a far higher level than the plane of a merely literal naturalism.

To us it appears that there cannot be any pure naturalism in art. Kuntaka's distinction⁴ between "*Svabhāookti*" and "*Vakrokti*" is a pointer to the right direction. Mammata's formulation⁵ of the concept of "*Prakṛti-Kṛta-Niyama-Rahitām*" leads one to the problem of relating nature and art. This inevitably leads to the interesting issue of relation obtaining between art, beauty, and truth. They posed long-standing problems and we may attempt at a proper appraisal of the intriguing situation from Abanindranath's point of view. We may thus divide the bigger issue and pose some specific questions to be answered in the lines to follow.

(1) Are beauty and art identical? If so, has it any necessary reference to truth?

(2) Does the identity of truth and beauty lead to the idea of imitation of nature? If so, the nature of this "mimesis" and its relation to Aristotelian "mimesis" may be determined.

(3) If this "mimesis" is selective and interpretative, how does it affect aesthetic universality?

(4) Lastly, if "art work" is considered as "modified imitation", how does it accommodate freedom in its compass? In this context how far is the concept of "*Līlā*" appropriate to Tagore's scheme of aesthetics?

The possible answers to the questions posed, strictly from Tagore's point of view, may be found from a perusal of the whole chapter. And the method, taken recourse to, has been

the historico-comparative method, as defined by Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal in his *New Essays in Criticism* (and explained by us in a previous chapter).

Art, Beauty and Truth

If art and beauty are taken to be non-identical, it gives rise to different sets of problems relating to their relation and it would be difficult to determine the place of the ugly in the scheme of aesthetics. Moreover, if the relata were taken to be heterogenous the problem of infinite regression as involved in the relation of such relata (as stated by Bradley) would have faced us.

Let us consider the problem analytically. If *A* stands for art and *B* for beauty and if they are taken to be non-identical and as such heterogenous in character, we are faced with the problem of relating the two relata.

<i>A</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>B</i>
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Now what is the nature of *R* as distinguished both from *A* and *B*? It is neither identical with *A* nor with *B*. Its meaning and significance as *R* discounts the possibility of its either being identical with *A* or *B*. So in order to relate *R* to *A* we have to posit a series $R_1 R_2 R_3$ and to go ad infinitum. Similarly another infinite series had to be brought in to relate *R* and *B*. These are the difficulties involved in the postulation of non-identity of art and beauty. So Tagore through the artist's insight knew that they were identical and they pertained to a pattern of truth which was of a different order from the truth either in the sense of correspondence or ordinary coherence or from the pragmatic truth. The art work presents a peculiar type of coherence, a coherence that involves the creator, the art-content, nature or the objective world and the appreciator. As would be evident in the lines to follow that the type of coherence as obtained between the work of art and nature is peculiar in every piece of art worth the name. And the coherence between the work of art and the appreciator is also absolutely peculiar to the training and temperament of the appreciator. Of course,

the type of coherence that obtains between the different parts of an art-work is more or less defined objectively. Even then this coherence may appear differently to different connoisseurs of art.

So Tagore instinctively felt the identity and unity of these three and attempted to rationalise the artist's instinct in his famous Vāgīśwari Lectures. We have deliberately omitted to mention the technique of the artist in the coherence-scheme of the art-work as we believe with Abanindranath that technique is no aspect of the aesthetic achievement. Tagore told us that to be a good artist one needs to master the technique. But one must transcend the sphere of technique and get into the realm of the beautiful where art has been installed.⁶ Technique is just a means with which both the artist and the craftsman are concerned. One with whom the technique is every thing, is just a craftsman. Both Abanindranath and Rabindranath spoke against this single-minded devotion to technique so very prevalent in modern art and literature of to-day.*

*While discussing this particular problem at a seminar of Indian artists and art-critics, Sri Laxman Pai, the noted painter opined that technique gives new direction and dimension to the originally intuited mental image. So it was important to give it an honoured place in the art-activity itself. Sri Prodosh Dasgupta, the noted sculptor, observed that in so far as sculpture was concerned, there was a confrontation between the artist and the material to be moulded. There was a sort of challenge from the material and the artist could meet this challenge only with the help of his superior technique and ultimately the material is given significant form. Ernest Cassirer, the noted philosopher, goes so far as to say that the technique was also intuited.

We may point out in this connection that the technique does not create and is, as such no part of art-activity. It simply translates into a visible form what is already there. This form already intuited may be a developing form like the "craggy hill" of Wordsworth. The ever active imagination of the artist intuit's some picture which is evergrowing. This growth is not a contribution of his technique. It is absolutely confined within the aesthetic boundaries and technique is, strictly speaking, out of bounds for aesthetic consideration. Tagore told us that there could be talent amongst the craftsmen as well but they should not be taken as artists. In sculpture or in painting, the artist tries to externalise the intuited vision which is never complete. The material and the technique are changed again and again because it is felt that they

Rabindranath's clear directive was embodied in that famous line of one of his Bengali poems:⁷ *Śudhu bhaṅgī diye yēno nā bholāya cokh*. Abanindranath tells us in unambiguous terms that the technique involves labour alone; it has no element of joy or *ānanda* in it. This element of *ānanda* in his work distinguishes an artist from a craftsman. One who labours without *ānanda* is a craftsman and the artist though moving through that strenuous discipline and labour of a technician or craftsman ultimately transcends them and reaches the realm of *ānanda* or pure joy and there he is an artist. While referring to Abanindranath's syncretism, we may note that he, in the formulation of his ideas on technique vis-a-vis aesthetic activity, is in the happy company of Buddhaghosa of the fifth century. What we popularly called "mind" is taken to be "*citta*" by Buddhaghosa. While writing the commentary on *Dhammasangani*, he says that, it is the artist's mental creative attitude, his imaginary representation and his mental intuition that constitute his art. Art is not something external, but it is spiritual and identical with the formative and creative spirit of the inner intuition. The objective expression is only accidental translation of it. His concept of mind as "in a state of flow" has two constituent elements, the mental action and its results, the mental consciousness. The consciousness of the moment dissolves itself into the flow and through the energy of the flow the consciousness of the creative motion merges in the consciousness of the second moment. Thus the consciousness and the flow combine together in producing the third moment of consciousness and that again, being associated with the flow, produces the fourth moment and so on. Buddhaghosa sought to explain this position more clearly with the illustration of a painting. He says that the real picture, is nothing but a mental one (*cittam citteneva cintitam*).† An

will not be equal to the task of bringing forth the artist's superb and gigantic vision. It is gigantic because it was ever-developing. This refutes also the position of Cassirer that the technique was also intuited. Cassirer's position is not borne out, from the memoirs and evidences of master artists on record.

†According to some other indologists, this refers to *caran-citra* a form of didactic art. (See N. R. Ray's *An Approach to Indian art*.)

objection may be raised that the pictorial representation is a reality of the objective and the external world, whereas in the mental imagination the picture or the intuitive creative flow is a subjective state: so there is no way in which we can identify the two. The reply to this objection is that in the mind of the creator there is the intuitive desire of creation. In consequence of this creative impulse there is produced a corresponding state of imagination, visualisation of the mental state, which is directly responsible for the objective representation of it through lines and colours. This creative impulse induces with it various suggestions which respond internally to the creative flow and it is by this way alone that the creative process of the mind realises itself. Even if the mental imagination and intuition had not been externally manifested, yet we should have considered that the artist could have attained his mission by the internal flux of the mind. What we experience externally is merely a translation of the mental conception and imagination. For this reason the mental picture could be considered as "some art" even though it was not translated in external forms. The external representation is merely an imitation of the internal state.⁸ So Buddhaghosa brings out clearly in philosophical language what Abanindranath tries to articulate in terms of an artist's comprehension. For, him, an object of art (beauty) is a joy for ever. In this world of art he is face to face with Him who is "*Raso Vai Sah*". So Abanindranath identifies beauty and art and he thought that they had truth for its pedestal. He postulated a continuity from one to the other. In some of his lectures, he, again, identified them. The truth of an art-work consists in expression. Truthfulness, in the ethical sense when applied and considered in the field of aesthetics becomes anachronistic. Following the logical positivists like Neurath and Hempel we might attribute to Abanindranath the view that for him, truth was syntactical and not a semantic concept, i.e. aesthetic facts do not correspond to empirical facts. They simply cohere to the rest of the system to which they belong. That is why while speaking of "truth of art" Abanindranath does not rely on "senses" to be the only determinant of "truth" in art. He believes in a syntactical concept of truth. He tells us:⁹

It is clear then that mere sense of sight will never lead you further than women differently dressed and differently occupied, old or young or middle-aged, fat or thin, fair or dark. Sight will never give you the spirit, the soul indwelling the form, it will always parade before you a number of dressed up puppets posing and simulating a mother or a savant, a queen or a sweeper; it will never give the true mother or the true queen, but always the actress, a wooden toy amusing, sometimes amazing, to look at. The difference that exists between outer forms gives us only the variety and not the verity which underlies all *rūpa*.

Here Abanindranath tells us that verity or truth underlies all *rūpa* and in another context he calls it the pedestal. Sight or the senses alone cannot get at this "truth" in art. Intellection always gives artists' truth its syntactical form. In his idea of "*Rūpabheda*" this element of intellection is too prominent to be missed. The so-called ugly life, or any object of ordinary experience, could be an object of art and consequently beautiful, if properly reoriented in the hands of a true artist. Art is beautiful, and it is true. False pretensions are ugly. Truth and beauty were identified by Keats, and Abanindranath, by identifying them, followed in the wake of this great English poet. We also had similar views from a savant like Romain Rolland; who said categorically that if art had anything to dabble in falsity, we would better say good-bye to all arts. Some modern critics, however, denounce such identification of truth and beauty, and do not consider it essential for any true work of art to express the true. They consider it to be an epiphenomenon of the age of science, and considered Keats as only representing this age when the latter pleads for the non-duality of truth and beauty. But the single-minded devotion to truth only made Abanindranath's art all the more fascinating, and it had its appeal to all who knew to read the cryptic language of fine arts. Of course, artistic truth is different from "facts". In Abanindranath, truth had a different connotation. According to him, when we identify beauty and truth, we do not take art to be a mere photograph of what we see all around us.

Here truth is not taken in the sense of correspondence with facts. Facts are different. Artistic anatomy is different from medical anatomy. Artistic anatomy fluctuates and changes. It is a chameleon, and changes its colour so often. Anatomy of an art-object is entirely dependent on the vision of the artist. In the Hindu pantheon, Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning is full-bodied and with heavy hips and that is why the artist creates her accordingly only to convey her mother-hood potential. Thus the anatomy of the goddess of learning had to depend on the idea of the artist who conceived her image, and that too according to *Śruti*. So, it is said that history and art were different. Gibbon is an historian while Caesar is an artist. One wrote the history of Rome and the other created history. One is a chronicler of facts, with no freedom of his own, the other is an artist, enjoying the full freedom of creation. Caesar made history and Gibbon recorded it. One obeyed his will to create and the other obeyed the rigid dictation of brute facts. So truth in the artistic sense should not be confused with the commonsense notion of truth. Fiction and fairy tales also enjoy prestige as works of art. They have a different standard of evaluation and it is not in correspondence with the factual details. This view of Abanindranath had the approval of his illustrious uncle Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath characterised art as *māyā*. It does not follow reality, nor does it care for any faithful representation thereof. It is deceptive. It creates a world of illusion. It is a sort of magic, of course not in any derogatory sense.* The seedling is made to sprout up without a seed. Man is made out of the moon and the moon out of man. That is what the artist actually does. (Both Rabindranath and Abanindranath agree on this point. Like Plato, the Tagores believed that from contemplation of beautiful forms we come to the awareness of the imperishable beauty which is indistinguishable from Truth.)†

Bertrand Russell told us that a student of philosophy should

* This has been explained in Chapter 1.

† Saṃkara's idea of "*nāma-rūpa*" as conducive to the awareness of Brahman may be compared to the above view of Tagores.

not be afraid of paradoxes. Paradoxically enough, this world of art and the world of experience though different in their very nature, are not completely divorced from each other. They are somehow related in the broad compass of an appreciating mind. Art is not thoroughly segregated from experience of all descriptions. There is a continuity from one world to the other—from the world of *experience* to the world of *art*. Art is unity, and this unity is a type of coherence obtainable in its different parts or aspects and with others concerned. The artist sees unity in the diversity of nature. The many is harmonised into a rounded whole, and the appearance of unity becomes a reality with the artist. He sees nature and also creates it. For an artist, seeing is creating, and his creation does not follow the natural laws. That is why Abanindranath told us that art is "*niyatikṛta niyamarahīta*" (where the natural laws are inapplicable). It follows nature and surpasses it. There is a continuity, a passage from one to the other. This coherence is not only vital for any true work of art, but it is also necessary for a proper appreciation of it. Without an agreeable feeling towards a work of art, no one can appreciate the beauty in it. If it grates on your imagination, the work of art is rejected as a failure. Thus, it must cohere, it must agree with the appreciator's mental set-up. So, in a sense, coherence in art involves "other". Thus a work of art must cohere in its different parts somehow cohere with nature, and also with the appreciating mind. All these demand true talent to make art what it really is. The artist, to quote Abanindranath:

. . . brings the life that is pulsating in the diversity of natural forms to bear upon his creation. His brush becomes the vehicle of his will to create, and unites the artist's universe, the artist, and his creation in a rounded whole.¹⁰

Abanindranath believed that the six laws of painting, as prescribed by Indian art *Śāstras*, were meant for bringing together a close harmony between the creator and the creation, the appreciator and the content of creation. We referred to the fact that art imitates nature and surpasses it. On the one hand,

we have the shackles that nature offers in the form of her laws; on the other hand, we have the freedom of the world of imagination. Art attempts at a synthesis of the two. It creates an image that sometimes looks like natural, and sometimes does not, and yet it outshines nature in point of perfection. For an artist, nature might be the starting point but certainly not the goal. This office of art has been ably described by Bracquemont (as quoted by Abanindranath). He says that the art has been pursuing the chimera, attempting to reconcile two opposites, the most slavish fidelity to nature and the most absolute independence, so absolute that the work of art may claim to be a creation.

This "mimetic" element (as understood by Tagore) in art does not in any way affect its character as creation. Artist creates a *tertium quid*, a novel quality, which makes art what it is. Man, as an artist, becomes a second creator. He puts up shapes and forms in a world where there were none. Rhyme and rhythm are his own creation and he imparts life to the inert and the dead. That is the business with which the artist busies himself.

Art and Nature—A Continuum

Now let us understand the nature-art relation in greater details. To make art a true creation, we must be selective and interpretative. We must have ears to hear and eyes to see. To see what was never on sea or land, is not ordinary seeing; to hear the whispers of the spirit of the woodland we need a Wordsworth's ears. All that we see and hear cannot be brought forward in the domain of art. Life cannot be produced verbatim in this world. If it is so produced, it flags, becomes stale and tiring. This view of Abanindranath had a wide support in many quarters.* Weirtz writes: "Nothing is so tiring as a constant close imitation of life. One comes back inevitably to imaginative work". Abanindranath tells us that this world of imagination gives us relief from the boredom of repetitive

* Tagore's syncretism may be noted here.

experience. It is Andre Malraux's "musee imaginaire", or the museum of imagination that makes an artist what he is supposed to be. There he finds all the treasures left to him as a legacy by men of talent and taste. He selects materials and forms therefrom, and gleans crude facts from nature. His aesthetic sense would teach him what to select from nature and how to do it. Like an adept gardener, an artist is to select the materials for his work of art. Artistic reality is to be picked up from a world of inartistic realities. This realisation of the artistic and the inartistic is innate in every true artist. This realisation can hardly be acquired. This concept of innateness which we find in Abanindranath, is shared by many wellknown artists and art critics. To quote one of them from India:

There is true and false realization, there is a realization which seeks to impress the vital essence of the subject and there is a realization which bases its success upon its power to present a deceptive illusion. This realization which seeks to impress the vital essence of the subject helps an artist. Art is to supplement nature. Nature is handicapped by matter and art is the handwork of the spirit. In art, spirit speaks to spirit. The philosophy of the Upaniṣads inspired the Indian minds for ages, and Abanindranath had initiation into this great philosophy at an early age. He believed that the absolute mind touched all true works of art, and made them what they were.

Rabindranath shared his belief. Rabindranath defined art as the "response of man's creative soul the call of the real."¹¹

Similar definitions of art may be found in the West. Van Loon, for example, writes:

Man, even at his proudest moments, is a puny and helpless creature when he compares himself to the gods. For the gods speak unto him through creation. Man tries to answer, he tries to vindicate himself, and that answer; that vindication is really what we call art.¹²

This response of man is a new creation, a new entity pitted against the divine creation. It plays with empirical data and brings forth the light that never was on sea or land. The nature is surpassed.

Again, Abanindranath considers art to be interpretation. It interprets nature and suggests a new meaning to all the drab and mechanical ways of nature. This suggestiveness is the business of art. Gilbert says: "Art 'interprets the mightier speech of nature. It is a poetical language, for it is an utterance of the imagined, addressed to the imagined, and to rouse emotion". So also Abanindranath believed that art was selective and interpretative. It does not copy nature. Mere copying of nature entails servility to crass matter and a consequent lack of freedom. Without freedom, art is not possible. That is way Margaret Bulley told us that the depiction of real life is no concern of art. Life as it is, with all its rigid determinations, is far removed from the world of painting and poetry. No rule of life is applicable to that world, for if so applied, it would have taken away the freedom of the artist.

Though not a revivalist, Abanindranath had some intimate relation to Indian aesthetic traditions and it will be evident from the fact that in the enunciation of the above position vis-a-vis art and nature he comes close to the Sanskrit classics. In explaining the "Indianness" in Abanindranath's paintings and in those of his followers Coomaraswamy observes:

The work of the modern school of painting in Calcutta is a phase of the national reawakening. The subjects chosen by the Calcutta painters are taken from Indian history, romance and epic and from the mythology of religious literature and legends, as well as from the life of the people around them. Their significance lies in their destructive Indianness. We know that in ancient Indian arts human beauty had the beauty of nature for its ideal although nature was not copied verbatim. The ancient legends as found in Citralakṣana and Viṣṇudharmotara led Zimmer to think that genesis of art was in magic and the inner vision of the painter is bodied forth in the painting. Portraits were not directly copied from a sitting

model. Art should be the projection into susceptible materials of a menal vision.¹³

In *Kumārasambhava* Pārvatī is described as having been formed with all the elements of beauty that are usually found in nature.¹⁴ This naturalism was not the last word with the great poet. The yakṣa of Kālidāsa in the *Meghadūta*¹⁵ in pouring out the effusions of his love-laden heart to the cloud, which was asked to bear his message to his long separated wife, says as follows:

I try to satisfy my soul by trying to discover the expression of your beauteous limbs in the beauty of Nature, but your beauty excels them so much that I fail to do so. I look at the creepers to discover the grace of your form and movements. I look at the eyes of the startled deer to find similarity, with your lovely glances. I look at the moon to discover in it the shadow of your face, the feathers of the pea-cock for their similarity with your hair, the fine ripples of the river for their similarity with your dancing eyes, but I am sorry that they are so inferior to the beauties of your limbs and expressions that I can discover no similarity between your beauty and the beauty of nature.

Nature Idealised: Bharut, Sanci and Amaravati Art

In ancient Indian ideal of artistic beauty we could pick up some suggestions for the transcendence of nature. Historically speaking, this transcendence or treatment or transmutation of nature could be better understood with specific reference to Amarāvati art (2nd century to 3rd century A.D.) in contrast to the arts of Sanci (B.C. 1st century) and the Bharut (B.C. 2nd century). We fail to discern any foreign influence in the Amarāvati art; the natural flow of life which is the characteristic feature of Indian art found its full expression in this art form. Herein we find a fusion of "natural likeness" and "a full expression of the internal and the spiritual as dominating the natural". A scene depicted in this style tells us how a mad elephant tried

to attack the Buddha. The on-looking crowd was naturally afraid of the beast; but the Buddha was pacifying the whole situation by his calm self-consciousness. The awful ferocity of the animal and the fear reflected on human faces were strikingly natural. The calm born of spiritual self-consciousness had been wonderfully delineated. In Sāncī we found the deep sympathy of the artist with the whole of the animate world and therein we discovered the natural likeness in the figures. They followed of the artist with the whole of the animate world and therein we found the artist attempting to express independently his spiritual ideals and conceptions through the stone materials. We may recall with profit what Rene Grousset said in point: "The purely naturalistic art of Sāncī has now become spiritualized by a higher influence, which has raised to a higher plane and attained an idealism of the highest order".

In Bhārut, we noticed this naturalistic style and in some of them at least a conscious endeavour to overcome this naturalism. A trend towards idealisation of the "real" in art was gradually gaining momentum. Nature as it is, really as it is known, was gradually being transcended. But before the Guptas, one may contend, the Indian ideal of expressing the spiritual (or mental) through the material had not attained its perfection. In the older epochs the spiritual ideal of Indian art had not become self-conscious; it was more or less mute and the tendencies of an objective view of art and objective motives of religion determined the spirit of art. In consequence thereof in the artistic representation we found a greater tendency towards simulating nature and to portray religious events in an objective manner. We may refer again to Sāncī to illustrate our point. On one of the walls of Sāncī carvings, we find all animals, buffaloes, lions, tigers, wolves, serpents, deers, elephants, assembling underneath the Bodhi tree. The pantheistic ideal suggesting negation of "alienation and otherness" has been the binding force of the human and the animal world. But herein we find the use of natural symbols too dominant to suggest boldly what was done in the Gupta period. This process of transcending nature was visible in the Amarāvati art and became pronounced in the Gupta period (4th century A.D.) wherein we noticed this

tendency at its peak. The artists of the Gupta period (it is on record) thoroughly knew the proportions of the human body and could create efficiently a natural likeness. But in trying to represent a natural likeness they did not follow the geometrical canons of the Greeks. The Greek sculptors conceived the plastic space as polygonal where a number of planes met together in large obtuse angles and by a gradual melting away of the sides gave an expression of the plastic art. For the Chinese artist, the conception of space was elliptical. But, for the ancient Indian artist, it was internal and intuitional.¹⁶ The space representation of Indian artists was the internal and intuitional space which may be regarded as a dynamic psychological volume than as a static polygonal or elliptical plane. Their ideal was to recreate the inner rhythm (*Chandas*) of the natural flow of life, that permeates life itself. This they did with curved baggy lines. It is for this reason that the artists of the Gupta period represented human face in an oval shape and the forehead and the eyeballs were drawn in the curve of a bow, the eyes were drawn in imitation of the eyes of a gazel or a fish or a bird, the neck was drawn in imitation of the neck of a goose, the thighs were drawn in imitation of an elephant's trunk, the hands were made in imitation of a stalk of a lotus and the fingers like a budding *champak*. Thus they realised the inner unity between the world of nature and the human world in the creation of these wonderful art-forms. In plastic art the movement of life was only shown by curvy lines drawn in imitation of similar lines in the world of nature. Gradually idealisation of nature was realised in fantastic proportions in the arts of this period. Art drifted away from nature-reference (at least in the majority of cases) and virtually became embodiment of intuited visions or ideas. Rane Grousset bears testimony to this total transcendence of nature when he refers to the fingers of the Buddha of the Gupta period as preserved in the Muthra Museum:

The limbs are pure and harmonious, the faces have a tranquil suavity and it is inspired by an art so stupid in intellectualism as to be a direct expression of the soul through the purely

ideal beauty of form. Perhaps we shall understand the character of these works better if we consider that they are contemporary with the luminous and fluid metaphysics of the great Indian idealists of the Fifth century an Asanga or a Vasubandhu.¹⁷

Dasgupta described this transcendence of nature as the idealisation of nature. According to him "With the Greek, the idealised human body was the standard of beauty, while with the Indians it was the idealised Nature that was regarded as the highest standard".¹⁸ Dasgupta then goes on to describe the genesis of this creative activity. According to him, the ancient Indian artists drew inspiration from Nature for their conception of beauty and on the other, they tried to externalise in plastic and colour forms the subjective ideals and spiritual longings. For this reason the form of the deity (found in ancient Paintings and sculptures) as realised in meditative intuition was verbally recorded as far as possible and it was the duty of the plastic artists to represent in it visual forms also. Thus the meditative intuition on the one hand translated itself into visual forms and on the other the visual representation on the basis of the mental intuition sought for to be realised by meditation by the novice who proceeded on the path of meditation.

To describe this psychical process involved in creative activity, we may refer to Kālidāsa, the epic poet of ancient India. While describing the unearthly and ethereal beauty of Śakuntalā, Kālidāsa¹⁹ describes the psychical process involved in the creation of this beautiful form thus:

The creator must have first conceived the form of Śakuntalā in its entirety and then had inspired the intuited image of the heart with life, and externalised it in the visible form of Śakuntalā: and he must have assembled together in his mind all the elements of beauty and created her by the assemblage of them all as a mental creation.

In keeping with the spirit of the above observations of Kālidāsa we may suggest that as much according to Kālidāsa

as according to Abanindranath, nature—inspired intuitions made art-works what they were. These intuitions transcended nature. May we again refer to Kālidāsa to illustrate our point. The great poet in describing the nature of the painted representation of Śakuntalā by Duṣyanta, says that by graceful delineation Duṣyanta has been able to give an expression of his personality and emotion with which the form of Śakuntalā was intuited in his mind and that this was the secret of the charm of painting. We thus see that one of the most important elements of plastic and pictorial art is the “mental intuition or vision by which anything is conceived and intuited in the mind with emotive personality of the artist”. We may note here that this intuition is of the nature of “*Dhyāna*” or meditation in which the artist melts his personality in the emotive vision or intuition of the object of his representation which may be a spiritual idea or a physical form. In consonance with our older traditions Abanindranath suggests this artist activity (at the inception level) to be of the nature of “*Dhyāna*” when he holds that the apparently inactive artist sitting by the window-side and gazing out leisurely is the “most active” in the literal sense of the term. When he is apparently idle, his whole being has been the most active in concentrating on his possible contents of art-creations and the concentration is akin to “*Dhyāna*”. We are conscious of the fact that the so-called art-content is of no special significance apart from the form—the duality of the two is a matter of distinction without difference. Imagination of the artist gives a new form to the old and the content of common experience is changed beyond recognition in the artist’s experience. His imagination does the trick.

Let us try to understand the function of imagination from another viewpoint. In further elucidating the idea of imitation of nature and its transcendence in artistic creations stated earlier we may refer to Tagore’s lecture entitled “*Sādṛśya*” in the *Vāgāśvarī Śilpa Pravandhāvalī*.²⁰ It will help us in understanding how this transcendence works by referring the full moon in the sky to the face of a damsel how often and in the most peculiar manner the referent assumes new dimensions in the poet’s or artist’s imagination. To quote Tagore’s words: “Ever

since the Vedic times the creation of beauty has always been based on likeness to the figures, resemblances between various forms and expressions . . .” We know that there is always a general outward resemblance between man and man as well as between man and ape. We also notice that at the same time there exists a dissimilarity of feature and form. When we consider gestures and movements, there too we observe various likenesses and similarities emerging. One walks like the stately elephant, the other aways like the swinging leafy creeper. The painted portraits resemble the person one has actually seen.

This is the first stage, that of likeness in outward shape. At the next stage the pictured person takes on the form of a lion or Garuda, the king of birds; here we are concerned with likeness in mood or nature. In the first instance the likeness is brought out wholly by imitation or copy. In the second instance one must consider the resemblance in mood and expression, between men and lower animals. In both likenesses there operates the artist's notion of form as born of visual experience. Thus sometimes the picture copies and makes an imitation of a person's ways and manners as seen by the artist; sometimes the ways and manners of the person who has observed are compared with the ways and manners of some animals one has observed and this shape emerges from the combination. Although we have never seen what Buddha really looked like, we can easily recognise him in a stone image by the suggestiveness of the various traditional lines of nose, mouth, and eyes. So we find that in the above-quoted essay, Abanindranath has been attempting to bring out the function of imagination in discovering likeness between two disparate entities, or situations or modes. The comparisons at times are far-flung and they could be well understood or properly grasped only when imagination is brought to bear on the whole situation. From the presented to the referent (as in the case of a work of art) there seems to be a far cry. Similarly, in the far-fetched similes, we speak of a similitude which could not possibly be discovered without the help of imagination. Tagore speaks of: “The ear-rings of pearls, the bits of precious stone give out that they are as pollens from flowers which have dropped from the rainbow or as drops of

tears"²¹ Such are the similies and comparisons that are suggested by the poet's imagination. A reference to nature and its simultaneous transcendence are discernible in the aesthetic ideas of both the ancient and modern India. This transcendence sometimes takes us to the unknown and unknowable and He who is unknown and unknowable is hinted at through significant forms. When we try to understand the meaning and purpose of the creator of the universe in terms of aesthetic enjoyment, we exclaim: *Raso Vai Sah*—He is himself "sasa" (may be said to be the height of aesthetic joy). Herein the referent is unknowable and He is imagined in terms of aesthetic joy of the highest order. This imagination, according to Tagore, had an all important place in the aesthetic activity. *A Tadbhinnatve Sati tadgata bhūyodharmavattvam*, i.e. they differ and yet have much of a sameness. The disparate objects compared in a simile have a common participation and this common ground has somehow reference to both. In the case of nature being transformed into art—in very many cases—the reference to nature becomes a historical event only. The aspect in nature as event in life could not be directly traced to a art-work by any canons of similitude. This is true at least in some cases. There in such cases we get a particular poem, song, or painting, etc., referred to a natural event or phenomenon on the strength of biographical evidence. However, the point remains that there is reference either to a physical event or to a mental phenomenon or to some relation inter se, when we go to make a painting or write a poem. The element of transformation and transcendence are so great that there remains very little similitude between the stimulus and the response. But it is present and on the evidence of the testament of great artists we may assume this stimulus and response to be casually connected. (This can neither be proved nor demonstrated. This may roughly be illustrated only.)

Abanindranath Tagore has given an interesting account of how reality is transformed and transmuted and is given a new habitation and a name in the artist's imagination. The account is really fascinating and opens up a new vista of the working of the artist's mind. His imagination obeys his own laws. For

him there is not set rule which demands abject surrender. Tagore tells us that set rules are meant for the art students and not for the artist; classical images of gods and goddesses demand a rigid conformity to all that is laid down in the *Sāstras*: but with regard to image-making of other varieties, the artist must enjoy complete freedom. In an introduction to his Bengali essay entitled "Mūrti", Abanindranath requests his readers and fellow-travellers not to take these aesthetic canons and form-analyses of our art-treatises, with all the rigours of their standards and their demonstrations, as representing absolute and inviolable laws nor deprive their art-endeavours of the sustaining breath of freedom, by confining themselves and their works within the limits of Sastric demonstrations.²¹ He says that till we find the strength to fly we cling to our nest and its confines. But even while within our bounds, we have to struggle for the strength to outstep them; and then to soar away, breaking through all bondage and limitations, realising the full significance of our struggles. For, let us not forget that it is the artist and his creations that come first and then the law-giver and his code of art. Art is not for the justification of the *Śilpa-Sāstra* but the *Sāstra* is for the elucidation of art.... To illustrate his point, Tagore speaks of him who realises Dharma (the law of Righteousness) and attains freedom but the seeker after Dharma has at first to feel the grappling bonds of scriptures and religious laws. Even so, the novice in art submits to the restraints of *Sāstric* injunctions, while the master finds himself emancipated from the tyranny of standards, proportions and measures, of light, shade, perspective, and anatomy. The true artist's mind is like a stream overflowing its bank on one side, where there are the rules of law. But just as a river forms new lands and pastures on one bank while destroying everything that it comes across on the other, so is the artist's creative energy. It breaks through the age-old traditions, only to create new ones. It disobeys the traditional "do"s and "dont"s only to obey his own inner laws. In this sense, the artists must be free. Abanindranath considers this freedom from all outside dictations as essential for the creation of true works of art. That is why he repudiated the copy theory again and again. In his brochure

entitled *Bhārat Śilpé Śaḍaṅga*, we come across copious quotations from Bowie's book *On the Laws of Japanese Painting*, and these quotations are meant to show that art does not reproduce what we see in nature. Bowie says: "They paint what they feel rather than what they see.... It is the artistic impression which they strive to perpetuate in their work".

Art as Desubjectification

Tagore tells us that the artist's work is complete when the subjective impressions are objectified. This is why Benedetto Croce, the noted Italian philosopher, defined art as "desubjectification of subjective feelings". There we find Croce and Abanindranath agreeing to a large extent. The land of neo-idealist Croce today showed signs of a definite swing towards realism. The neo-realist school was gaining ground there, and the leader of this movement was Luchino Visconti. Cesare Zavattini, another exponent of this school, explains their mission thus: "We want to show the wonders of reality. Our idea is to show people things that happen under their own eyes, to enable them to savour, to enjoy the flavour of every day". But this craze for presenting the crudely real in art, has already shown signs of a decaying influence. People do not like to face the same ugliness of life in the world of art. Lack of sound and constructive optimism in their productions has made the neo-realist movement unpopular in Italy. An exact or a close proximity to reality does not make any art great. And while discussing this issue, we have been specifically answering question (2) above (p. 209). As for Tagore's realism, we may say that though himself a realist, Abanindranath did not share the views of these neo-realists. He stood for selected and embellished nature. Nature, so reoriented, could find a place in the world of art. Illustrations of this theory could be found in quite a large number among the works of Abanindranath. Paintings and sketches like "*Sājāhāner mṛtyu*" and "*Mid Sea*" could be cited as instances in point. The pathos in the painting styled as "*Sājāhāner mṛtyu*," came from the bleeding heart of a father who lost his beloved daughter only a few days earlier.

For parallels, we may refer to the paintings of Madame Chiang Kai Shek, as a representative of that tribe of artists whose landscape paintings bear the hall mark of a peculiar type of realism. Madame Chiang's paintings showed her faith in an aesthetics akin to that of Abanindranath. But she was not always successful in de-subjectifying her feelings in the right way. Often she grew over-realistic, and her paintings lost much of the charm and beauty that we find in her "less real" works. Her two paintings, "Looking up Miao Kao terrace" and "Winter pines", appeal to a casual visitor to an art gallery. When these two paintings are contrasted with another two paintings, "Autumn garden party" and "Four occupations", by the same artist, the truth of our contention becomes self-evident. It has been said of Madam Chiang that she paints from memory; but it does not hold good of the last-named paintings. There we find that an allegiance to reality has taken away much of the charm and suggestiveness that we find in the first two paintings. Herein we get the empirical evidence in support of Abanindranath's contention that art should not copy nature blindly and mechanically. Moreover, according to him, the artist's business is creation of a different world of values, which is different from the world of mundane existence. His mind's eye far surpasses the capacities of the most powerful telescope, and discovers fairly fairy lands which we common people could never possibly see. It is only an artist who finds Alice in that wonderland. This eternal artist is everywhere. He might live here as an Abanindranath, and there as a Bacon in a different perspective. It was a Bacon who could discover his "New Atlantis" far away from the din and bustle of this world of ours. Bacon was sure of his place there. He knew that when he put out to sea, there would await him, undisturbed by the tides of time, a great island of utopia, his own "New Atlantis"—one of the dreams of his philosophical system—glittering in the sunshine of eternity. His pen immortalised his dream. Thus, the visions of all these visionaries testify to the veracity of Abanindranath's observation that the business of art is creation of a different set of values and not mere mimicry. So Tagore's contention of a "selective and representative nature" in art is quite consistent with his peculiar brand of realism, which we ascribed to Tagore. This

type of realism demands that thorough exposition of his concept of "Mimesis" should be presented and incidentally we propose to compare Tagore's ideas on imitation with those of Aristotle. But initially we may bear in mind that protographic representation was neither possible nor was seriously meant in the context of art either by Aristotle or by Abanindranath. For, we know of the celebrated painter Ludwig Richter writing in his Memoirs, how once when he was in Triveli as a young man he and his three friends set out to paint the same landscape. They were all firmly resolved not to deviate from nature. They wished to reproduce what they had seen as accurately as possible. Nevertheless the result was four totally different pictures, as different from one another as the personalities of the artists. So mimesis could not mean an exact copy even when the painter wanted to copy verbatim. If judged from this viewpoint, the question of duplication of nature in art becomes absolutely redundant for it was not possible to copy nature as illustrated in the case quoted above. However let us revert to Aristotle's time and his ideas of imitation, for we believe that Aristotle would not be properly understood without a reference to the period to which he belonged.

Aristotle appeared at a time when proper assessment of the Hellenistic ideal was possible, as it was the post-Platonic period. The gloom that was inspired by the prevalence of amusement art among the Greeks, was not real for Aristotle as it was for Plato. The fifth-century Hellenistic optimism struck a new note in Aristotle, so different from what we find in Plato; and this made possible a reassessment of Plato's theory of mimesis by Aristotle. Mimesis made Plato's art doubly removed from *reality*. It meant abject surrender to the "phenomenally real"; and a copy, as has been rightly pointed out by Plato himself, can hardly suggest any other value than one absolutely vitiated by servility*. Aristotle considered imitation to be the imitation of the ideal. The presented is re-presented in art with an element of ideality introduced in it. "Art-content" and "object-content" are different for Aristotle. In art, the object is not imitated but represented. It would be prudent to remember

*Plato's ideas on imitation was unpsychological as was illustrated in Richter's story quoted above.

that art is not identical with naturalism. If by naturalism is meant copying nature, and naturalism in art meant transporting nature in her crudities in the domain of art, then certainly naturalism would be absolutely useless in any aesthetic context and Plato's charge would have held ground. But by naturalism, we do not mean literal representation as such, but the literal representation of the common-sense world of things as they appear to a normal and healthy eye. Breughel's pictures of animal demons, Strindberg's spook sonata, Poe's thrillers, Beardsley's fantastic drawings, and surrealist paintings are strictly and literally representational; but the world they represent is not the common-sense world. This representation is not a "complete literalness" in the sense of a naive or non-selective representation, whose specimens we find in the paleolithic animal paintings or Egyptian portrait sculpture. It has been found that the same emotional effect can be produced even more successfully by bold selection of important and characteristic features. These features are selected, for they are thought to be capable by themselves of evoking the emotional response. Art involves this selection and rejection and that is why for Aristotle, it was an intellectual virtue. It is creative activity under intellectual direction. If, therefore, an artist, contends Aristotle, is not guided by intellect in his creative activity, if he is concerned with the realm of the sense only, if he presents the sensuous and completely ignores the idea, which can be grasped only through the intellect, he is not an artist at all. Artifacts representing the original in this sense have sometimes been branded as the symbol of the original. However, symbol conveys a meaning which is different in kind from that conveyed by representation. Representation is selective, and it is an effective means of emotional representation. According to Aristotle, the function of representative art is to rouse emotion. The true definition of representative art is not that the artifact resembles the original, but that the feelings evoked by it resemble those evoked by the original. This is Aristotle's sense of representation. It means idealisation; the presentation of things, not as they are to be known under the controlling force of ideas. Thus imitation, for Aristotle, does not consist in the faithful representation of

objects as they are actually found in nature (which, in fact, was an impossible task), but in idealisation, in presenting them as they should be under the control of the "ideas" which are immanent in them; we may say, to make our point clear that it aims at the "mean". It is the presentation of an advance on a given reality. It is not confined to the perceptible. It extends to the mental. According to Aristotle, both narration and assimilation are manners of imitation, while Plato rejected narration as a manner of imitation. Quite consistent with the new meaning, he considers some kind of music to be "representative". He considered dithyramb and epic as representative. He agreed with Plato that drama is representative, as it was essentially a means of arousing emotion. We should bear in mind that Aristotle's *Poetics* was a defence of representative poetry, and he brought to bear his metaphysical, psychological, and ethical concepts on his concept of aesthesis.

Ideas of Mimesis: Aristotle and Santayana Compared

Mimesis or "imitation" was the pivotal word of *Poetics*. According to Aristotle, poetry does not only imitate. It imitates human actions with a definite plan or purpose. The poet is to turn away from himself and his own emotions and work, like the painter with his eye on the object. Aristotle wanted the poet to be intensely objective, but, at the same time he tells us that the artist should imitate things not as they are but as they ought to be. His imitation is an ideal imitation and he expects of the artist a selected truth raised above all that is local and accidental, purged of all that is abnormal and eccentric, so as to be in the highest sense representative. Art corrects nature and such art which makes good the imperfections of nature, has been characterised by Aristotle as "industrial". The artist, according to Aristotle, holds up a mirror to nature. But his mirror is not an ordinary mirror. Neither does it exactly reproduce, nor does it distort, the objects which confront it. Indeed its object is the exact opposite of distortion. According to Aristotle it presents a picture in which the confused, and, therefore, unintelligible facts of life are reduced to coherence. It transforms a blur into a picture. And in order to perform this miracle of giving

form to chaos, the dramatist's first business is to make his story one coherent whole. It is the artist's selection, and the consequent effect of inevitable sequence, which achieves this. Experience presents life as an irrational tangle of incidents. The artist's mirror makes sense of the tangle and represents life with a pattern distinct in the threads. There is unity in it, the need of which has been so much stressed by Aristotle. The "imaginative" imitation of the artist presents to us not the confused and confusing details but the governing principles of human life. He gives us, in Aristotle's language, not the "particular" but the "universal". This perhaps helps Aristotle explain the universality of art even though it was the response of an individual. The student of Aristotle's "Lectures on Poetry" would remember how he had said, speaking on quite a different subject, that the "value of a universal is that it reveals causal connection". So we see that, to have unity, the story in a drama must be universal and to this end the incidents must be so selected that they seem to be bound in a strict sequence of cause and effect. It is "selection" that gives art its own reality and it is delightful on this account. To quote Aristotle: "Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages even the lower animals being this that he is the most imitative creature in the world and learns at first by imitation. And it is natural for all to delight in works of imitation".²² And imitation is also an inexhaustible source of delight, as is proved by the fact, that, though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight nevertheless in viewing the most realistic representations of them in art—the forms for example, of lowest animals and of dead bodies. Aristotle describes this delight rather as a theoretical than as a specially aesthetic experience. "To be learning something", Aristotle declares, "is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosophers but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning—gathering the meaning of things, e.g. that the man there is so-and-so".²³ At first sight this principle seems to apply to the representative arts. It could, however, easily be transferred to all the other forms. Music itself became a picture of things. Even flute

playing and dancing are, after all, nothing but imitations; for, the flute player or the dancer represents by his rhythms men's characters as well as what they do and suffer.²⁴ Aristotle gave a new meaning to "imitation" and his embellished imitation comes very close to Abanindranath's ideas which he expounds with reference to art-nature relation. Like Aristotle, Abanindranath also told us of the comic delight that is derived from comic situations. Both were opposed to photographic imitation. For both, nature as represented in art was "nature idealised". Tagore spoke of imitation in different contexts and they have been carefully noted in the lines to follow. Apart from Aristotle, Tagore has a parallel in this regard in one of the aesthetic hedonists of modern times. We mean George Santayana. Let us quote him where he tells us when this imitation has got to be condemned:²⁵

Many half trained observers condemn the work of some naive or fanciful masters with a sneer, because as they truly say, it is out of drawing. The implication is that to be correctly copied from a model is the prerequisite of all beauty. Correctness, is, indeed an element of effect and one which, in respect to familiar objects, is almost indispensable, because its absence would cause a disappointment and dissatisfaction incompatible with enjoyment. We learn to value truth more and more as our love and knowledge of nature increase. But fidelity is a merit only because it is in this way a factor in our pleasure. It stands on a level with all other ingredients of effect. When a man raises it to a solitary pre-eminence and becomes incapable of appreciating any thing else, he betrays the decay of aesthetic capacity : . .

When we see a striking truth in any imitation, we are therefore delighted and this kind of pleasure is very legitimate and enters into the best effects of all the representative arts. Truth and realism are therefore aesthetically good but they are not all sufficient, since the representation of everything is not equally pleasing and effective. Abanindranath thought like Santayana that this all sufficiency of crude realism will have to be abjured.

Imitation, when given disproportionate eminence, cannot be considered to have acquired any aesthetic value, except some comic element. Being comic, it may become delightful and this aspect of imitation giving delight has been recognised by Santayana. Abanindranath, Santayana, and Aristotle all three ruled out photographic imitation. And Abanindranath's advocacy of freedom negates at the outset the very possibility of a servitude to crude reality. Imitation is mechanical and, as such, inartistic.

We may note here that the ghost of Platonic legacy influenced Aristotle, and it lingers even today in some form or other; that is why, aesthetic thinkers of Abanindranath's eminence could not go beyond the spell of utility considerations in art. Although it is evident from Abanindranath's writings on art that he did not consciously consider art to be subservient to utility. He distinguishes, in one of his lectures, the necessity of an ant from that of a bee, and opines that the bee's necessity is akin to that of an artist, because the bee is not a slave to its material necessities while the ant is so. The bee's honey-hunting is inspired by the "*nimantrana*" (invitation) from the beautiful, while the ant is prompted in his "*sandhāna*" (mission) by physical considerations, such as hunger and thirst. But Abanindranath's leaning towards subtle utilitarianism is pronounced. His pedagogism favourably compares with that of Aristotle. The historical necessity that obsessed Plato against amusement art, was not present either in Aristotle's or in Abanindranath's time, and yet they thought on subtle utilitarian lines, in spite of repeated assertions to the contrary. The uniqueness of art forms has been considered to be a product of much selection and rejection from nature by the artist. The "*svayamrūpa*" of the object in nature, Abanindranath contends, cannot be imported into an image by any means. The image falls far short of the "real" and, as such, cannot enjoy the dignity of the "real".* Such images, cannot be considered artistic because art is an improvement upon nature. The dignity of art is superior to that attributable to natural phenomena. An image being a copy of nature is thus doubly removed from the world of art as well,

*Subtle Platonic influence is traceable here.

Abanindranath further borrowed the classic definition of art and considered it to be "*niyatikṛta niyamarahita*", as has already been pointed out. Again, complete freedom of the artist, considered so essential for artistic creations by Abanindranath, rules out any possibility of a surrender to crass matter, and, as such, imitation is inadmissible in his theory. The "*svayamrūpa*" of the artistic object, Tagore tells us, is a complete and harmonious blend of the forms, the content of art, and its excellence; it is judged not by a reference to what is in nature but by what it could possibly be. So, Tagore in his inimitable way tells us of the "*svayamrūpa*" of the artistic work and of the object in nature and holds that there is no necessary relation between the two. One has reference to the other and usually one is understood with the other as referent. But the relation of copy-original or some such necessary relation is ruled out. Tagore tells us that art not only does not imitate nature, it cannot even be considered as symbol of the "unformed and unseen Being". Even this type of subjection of art to the "*arūpa*", the unformed, has been discounted by Abanindranath, for, it implies a reference to something beyond the level of art while adjudging its excellence as art. Art forms are adjudged by a reference to the ideal, and the artist corrects nature in the light of this ideal, and such corrections are never guided by any objective standard.

Art corrects nature. That is what Aristotle believed in, and Abanindranath subscribed to. Memory is a great aid to artistic creations. The artist's memory, according to Abanindranath, while remembering past experiences, goes through a process of selection and rejection, and, that is why, what he remembers and retains of his aesthetic experiences on a moonlit night, does not tally with those of another belonging to the same tribe. Remembrance implies a fidelity to the original which we remember, and, even in such cases, Abanindranath discovers certain elements not found in the original, and considers them to be remarks of artistic ability, and as such, deviations are pardonable. Memory and imagination make art what it is. The true artist hardly takes into account the beaten track. All that is done in the past might inspire him to new creations but

not to a copying of what is already there. That is one of the reasons why Abanindranath considered art to be indefinite. The form is unique and the content is unspecified, and, as such, its goodness or greatness is unimportant for the artist. This indefinable character of art guarantees its absolute independence, and eternally cancels imitation as an art theory. This imitation implies abject surrender to what is imitated. Imitation, qualified by selection and rejection from nature, in the sense of ideal construction, is acceptable to Abanindranath and he, in this sense, considers art to be an improvement upon nature. Art interprets nature and gives it a new meaning. He quotes Gilbert's observation in point and we have already quoted it. Psychologically considered, aesthetic creations have unique individuality. No two people could see and say the same way. Reference to the epic incident in Mahābhārata where all the princes saw differently "the bird" which Droṇācārya wanted them to shoot down, is illustrative. That is why art has been described by Abanindranath as "*ananya paratantra*", and artistic creations have been attributed unique individuality. This rejection of the copy theory of art led him to believe in the finality of the aesthetic judgment by the judging "I" in the form, "I judge it to be beautiful and it is beautiful". Aesthetic excellence, according to Abanindranath, is independent of objective guidance. Suggestiveness in art is the soul of art and this cannot live and thrive in an atmosphere of determinism. Imitation prescribes determination which was considered by Abanindranath to be contrary to the essence of art. Imitation of traditions was also discouraged by him. As imitation of nature was detrimental to the production of artifacts, so was the imitation of traditions to the progress of art. Imitation has been characterised as the "quicksand in the domain of art", and Abanindranath holds out a word of caution against this "quicksand". In this context, he inadvertently (inspite of all his earlier protestations becomes somewhat Platonic in adjudging all art-forms as mere copies of divine art-forms; and here he treads in the wake of the vedic seers. This indulgence in traditional theorising was shortlived and temporary, and he repudiated all forms of imitation in no uncertain terms in his subsequent writings.

That is why even young Abanindranath had no regard for the principle of "anatomy, perspective and caste shadow" so very religiously followed by the British realists in their works. The contemporary educated Indians, as a legacy from the British realists, had a great faith in this "exact copy of nature and cast shadow" principle. That is why they could not initially appreciate Tagore's paintings. A specimen of contemporary criticism will bring out the deviations discerned in his "painted characters" from their referents in nature:

Is it the underlying principle of Indian pictorial art that they will not resemble in any way the real objects or people will not be able to recognise them? In other words, is it the soul of the so-called Indian painting to contradict nature? . . . Any work that defies rules of anatomy becomes eligible for the gallery of Indian paintings. Imagination that in its recklessness shrinks not to elongate endlessly the heads and feet is not worth its name. Why the pictures painted according to Indian tradition are so much contrary to nature and bonelessly serpentine passes our understanding.²⁶

This criticism of Abanindranath and his followers ably brings out Tagore's ideas on "art's reference to nature". Nature is never intended to be copied in art; art idealised nature. Thus, Abanindranath agreed with Aristotle in denouncing imitation in the sense of producing copies of the original. They gave new meanings to the concept and made it worthy of being considered as the essence of art. Rejection and selection from nature and an implicit reference to the ideal, are common to their thinking. Thus, they struck similar notes on this crucial issue, though intellectually and physically they belonged to two different epoches of human history. But their ideas on "imitation" brings us to our question (3) posed above (p. 209) and we will be attempt to answer the question from the Tagoreite viewpoint.

The wide deviations from nature or from the outside world and the peculiar relation of correspondence (if we may call it so) between them raised another important problem in aesthetics,

viz. the problem of universal communication. It is often asked whether art has universal appeal or not? The concept of mimesis as found in Abanindranath raises the most controversial issue of the excellence of acceptance of a work of art by one and all objectively. If it is demanded of art that it must conform to the various tastes of a living generation, or to all varying tastes in different periods of time, we are excepting the absurd. Art never caters to the needs of a generation of men all at a time, and it is idle to expect that it should live through all the ages as a living force. Paradoxically enough, sometimes we find (good) specimens of art surviving the onslaught on time. How does it happen? What is the true meaning of universality in art? If there be any such universality in art, how it is effected? All these are baffling questions indeed. It is quite difficult to explain and account for the universality that (good) specimens of art enjoy. This universality has a limited application, and as such, it stimulated the introduction of "*adhikāravāda*" in the field of aesthetics by the Indian *ālaṃkārikas*. Art, according to them cannot be looked upon as the rendezvous for all. It is meant for those gifted people with that rare capacity for appreciating art proper. Education and training are aids to such art appreciation. Universality in art does not mean its democratisation. If art is to be democratised, it can be effected through mass education and regimentation. This type of regimentation is harmful, for, in course of time, it would encourage one particular form of art, and art would lose its variegated form and colour. The art movement of a country would reveal one pattern and it would ultimately become mechanical art robot-oriented.

It is interesting to note how Abanindranath understood the problem and solved it. Art, as a matter of fact, is expected to bear the impress of the individual mind, for, it is the response of an individual. It is not a creation of the social mind but it is an individual creation, stamped with hall-mark of an individual's peculiar way of seeing things. His uncle Rabindranath Tagore considered art to be the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real. Abanindranath also considered this

subjective element in art to be of primary and permanent importance.

Artist's Individuality and Universality of Art

The stream of objects is there outside me and independent of me. Some indefinable relation between this objective world and the world of art is undeniable. But the objective stream is viewed by the artist through his own glasses; and his way of permutation and combination of factual events which are in nature produce a world of make-believe for other people as well. This is the magic of the world of art. This again claims universality. Paradoxically enough, it bears an impress of eternity. It is temporal and at the same time its bid for transcending the time category baffles an understanding. The mural paintings at Ajanta, the murals of the Tunhuang caves, defied time in the sense that they lived through time and weathered all its travails. All such works of art are creations of individual minds, and at the same time, they become universal in a way. How this happens is beyond all human comprehension. This mysterious character of art has led some people to dub it as indefinable. Our Tantras likened this process of artistic creation to the flight of a bird from one tree to another, leaving no trace whatsoever of its trial of flight across the blues. This mystery has enlivened aesthetic discussions and we know of academic art, foreign art, and adapted art seeking to explain and understand the diversified art traditions of the world. Tagore tells us that an artist worth the name must liquidate his individualistic pre-occupations by the constant hammerings of a universalistic bias. The de-individualising is necessary for making the work of art acceptable to other minds. If it is to be made palatable to other plates, it must not absolutely conform to the taste of its creator. In order to explain this phenomenon, Abanindranath cites the example of a community dinner. When we invite some of our friends of similar likings and tastes, we may opt for a specialised menu, exclusively suited to our taste. But when the invitees are large in number, and they come from far and near, the menu must be broad-based. Our peculiar individual bias and likes and

dislikes must be disregarded in order to accommodate the varying tastes of a vast number of man and women. The individual taste must be so widened and deindividualised as to accommodate the tastes of the wider public. As it is in a symphony, so it is a work of art. In a symphony all the notes must harmonise, and the process of harmonisation may only take place when the different notes agree in accommodating one another. None of the notes could be so struck as to destroy the total effect. The toy instruments employed in toy symphony for example, are a "cuckoo", a "trumpet", a "drum", a "whistle", a "triangle" and a "quail". They respect each other's right to exist in the whole and the resultant effect is the symphony.

Thus, Abanindranath contends that in the case of all good art, the artist must not allow his individualistic bias to work too much on his creations. If it is so allowed, art appreciation on a wider scale becomes an impossibility. That is why he prescribes the liquidation of individualistic tendencies in the field of art by the sledge-hammering of a universalistic outlook. We must remember, Abanindranath points out, that the work of art is the meeting ground for the artist and the art-lovers. In *Ghanoyā*, he tells us that the edifice of art is a three-storeyed building, in which craft has been accommodated on the ground floor. The first floor is the rendezvous of artists and lovers of art. That is where the communion takes place. There they meet and the art-work is reviewed. Herein we find true art—an expression of the artist's inner images, brought forth and wrought on external medium. The top floor is exclusive to the artist; there he is in his sequestered vale. There he is busy with his creation. It is a forbidden land even for the lovers of art. The psychologists might have a peep into that Lhasa of the artist's mind, or the artist himself might be conscious of this inner working of his creative faculty. Where art is a finished product and awaits appreciation the artist must admit the appreciator. Absolute subjectivity on the part of the artist will make him obscure and unintelligible. That is why the artist comes down from his ivory tower of pure subjectivity, i.e. from the top floor to the first floor, where other people could share the artist joys and sorrows through a successful process of de-subjectification. The top floor

is the mystic's home. There he is unintelligible to the common man. (If from there he looks for his self-realisation, he becomes a full-fledged mystic, and if he cares to take recourse to expression instead, he becomes an artist.) This expression is necessarily meant for being acceptable to others.

Tagore tells the artist to remember this basic fact and it would help him lend tone and colour to his paintings which will live through time. This process of de-subjectification of the artistic image from the pure subjectivity of the artist, was taken by the Japanese painters to be the corner stone of all (good) art. Abanindranath agreed with them in understanding the meaning of universality as a process of de-subjectification of the artist's feelings. He elsewhere tells us of the assumption of the form and shape of the object appreciated by the appreciating mind. This phenomenon also presupposes the fact of de-subjectification by the artist of his absolutely subjective feelings. Without this, art appreciation or communion in art becomes a myth. This universalisation (conscious or otherwise) is the precondition of all good art. But, this process varies in its extent and depth, and that is why some arts are greeted with acclamation by contemporaneous people and some by posterity; some art-works belong to the age of the artist and some to all ages.

In the lecture entitled "*Arūpa nā Rūpa*", Abanindranath enunciates a self-effacing principle for the artist. The world that pops up in, or, is sometimes hinted at, by the creations of master artists, does not always and necessarily accommodate the artist. As we have already noted, Abanindranath while discussing the universality of art, specifically told us that the artist's individualism is to be de-individualised by the sledge-hammering of universalism. The artist must remember the wider task. The universal man must be considered as the appreciator of the work of art. And this consideration enforces a strict discipline on the artist not to betray his personal traits of character. In the words of Abanindranath:

The gift that makes the giver prominent is not so big as the gift that conceals the giver. The artistic excellence reaches its

high water mark where the artist would fill the mind of the appreciator with a deep sense of satisfaction, and the tone, colour, shade and the rest are not taken any note of . . .

A work of art, in the true sense, is not assigned the task of introducing its creator to the wider public.²⁷

This element of self-effacement or de-personalisation of the artist is rather difficult to understand. When the artist looks at the object, he definitely looks at it from his own point of view. That viewpoint is his personal viewpoint, and that personal viewpoint gives the art creation its uniqueness. Without this uniqueness, a work of art becomes stale and stereotyped. Art loses its freshness when it becomes a copy of what people created in the past. So, naturally, the artist's endeavour should be to create something novel and unique. This assertion normally entails a reflection of the peculiar traits of the artist's personality on his art-creation. But this has been discouraged and the artist has been asked not to betray his personal likes and dislikes, not to expose his personal identity through his creation. His individuality should be buried under the captivating form of his art-creation. This seems to be preposterous. Art, on the one hand, should be unique, and, on the other hand, it must be universal. To put it bluntly, art, in a sense, is to be personal and impersonal at the same time. They get mixed up and make good art what it is. How is it effected is not within the knowledge of anybody. Elsewhere, Abanindranath has explained how one of his paintings "Gaurī Topasyā", had its inspiration from the flight of a bird across a hillock lit by the last rays of the setting Sun. The *Tantra's* (already cited) came to his aid; they explained by comparing the artist's creation with the flight of a bird which left no trace of its flight left in the air. To common men and women, these types of problems are difficult to grasp. They are guided by the conventional laws of thought, and, as such, when art wants them to forget all about the operations of the law of contradiction or excluded middle, they are completely lost in a maze of bafflement. And that is why Abanindranath (quite conscious of this paradoxical position) tells us that art is deceptive. The artist is more than a magician. He creates a

deceptive world and claims it to be true in a way. Abanindranath's insistence on art being true might look meaningless in the context of the present discussion. But, if this "truth" is to be the truth of the form and not of the content, the contradiction disappears, and the controversy is laid to rest. Through some unmarked passage, the artist reaches his kingdom wherein he gets the appreciator along with him for a taste of aesthetic joy. There he is a master magician—his seedlings and flowers and foliages come out of no seeds, he makes a man out of the moon, and makes a full moon out of an ugly man. Here bad art and good art share a common rendezvous. We may note in this connection that the ancient legends of Citralaksana and Viṣṇudharmottara specially reveal the magical purpose of art and the ancient Hindu art was in some sense purposive. Platonic legacy more or less compared favourably with the Hindu legacy in this regard. The modern tendency has been to outgrow their age-worn influences. This illusive element in art points to its indeterminate character. This characterisation of art as 'indeterminate' is by no means escapism. Rabindranath Tagore also noted this indeterminate character of art and characterised art as *māyā*. This indeterminate character of art fits in well with Abanindranath's conception of art as play. This conception again amply explains his concept of reality in art, his ideas of content and form of art, and his notion of the artist's freedom. Once Abanindranath remarked: "Infuse 'bhāva' in the picture. We do not know what he meant by this 'bhāva'—idea or feeling or something else". What he possibly meant was an enlargement of the emotive content of the art-work. Any artist worth the name often does it successfully and when he fails to do so, his work lacks that "light that never was on sea or land". If we care to look at the pictures* drawn by the master from 1908-1915, we find them steeped in emotion (may be, in "bhāva" as quoted above). His noted disciple Nandalal Bose told us that they breathed "the simplicity of a child, the bashfulness of

*Reference is made to the reproductions of the early work of Abanindranath Tagore, edited by R. N. Chakravarty and published by the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

a village bride and the pathos of a pastoral flute". They are small water-colour paintings, (1.II); their subjects are Indian and Eastern. They depict stillness and a listening to the within. They have names and shapes of the past and their appearance is of the present. Their lines halt in their movement, their figures seem an act of evocation. It is personal and intimate. They are simply embodiments of eternal beauty. They were, in a sense, beauty incarnate. Both in content and form, they are sycrète. They are individual, stamped with the individuality of the artist and at the same time they suggest a process of deindividualisation which gave his paintings a type of universality, so rare even in the best specimens of art.

His Paintings Reviewed

In some of his paintings, we find the known nature peeping through the wonderful forms or bright colour schemes, as employed by Abanindranath and soon we discover that nature has been completely transcended. The known forms or aspects in nature with a little twist and being presented in an imagined perspective gave us completely moved effects. We feel fascinated and the element of too much familiarity, as we find in nature, gives place to a sense of seeing novel things. In some of these we find the human emotions being bodied forth. Pathos of a parting, the pensive heights of an imaginative ambition or the righteous indignation of a wronged lady—they are all there in one or other of these paintings. We find in them Tagore's imagination (and the role of the artist's imagination has been given a prominent place by Abanindranath in his scheme of aesthetics) playing unfettered.

It would be in the fitness of things, if in this context, we examine and analyse in detail some of the paintings of Abanindranath. In the portrait of Abdul Khalik the face is aged with the miniature care of the Mughals and heavy with naturalistic record. Around it are the dark outlines of things of the past, ewers and icons, a closed book and his hands grown shapeless holding a rosary. The rest is dim with suggestions, indistinct movements mount into space, the foreground remain-

ing empty. The revival of Indian art by Abanindranath is a resuscitation of Indian types in the climate of his soul. The background is indefinite; alouids, thoughts and objects dissolve in opalescent tints which have depth and convey memories of western observations. They respond to the arrested movements of the figures and to their nostalgic delicacy (Plates 4, 7, and 8, i.e. "The Traveller and the Lotus", "Dewali", and the Siddhas of the Upper Air). It has thinned them through filters of self-consciousness. Tenous and elongated, the figures hold the surface (Plates 1, 3 and 7, i.e. "Abhisārikā", "Spring", and "Devālī"). By intended distortions figures are lengthened and they linger (Plates 3, 4 and 5, i.e. "Spring", "The traveller and the Lotus", and "Rukmiṇī writing letter to Kṛṣṇa"). They pause. They hold the mood of the moment as their permanent attribute; flower, flute, light, and style are by way of illustrations only (Plates 3, 7, 9 and 13, i.e. "Spring", "Dewali", "A Scene from Omar Khyyam", and "Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa"). They have no weight. The lines stay, they do not flow, the outline traces the thought of the shape after it has touched it. In that interval, emotion looks at itself and withholds its gesture. Nothing is spent nor carried away even though the scene is open on the side towards which the figures turn, facing a beyond, outside the painting, that would answer their dream of themselves (Plates 3, 7 and 8, i.e. "Spring", "Dewali", and the "Siddhas of the Upper Air"). It is indicated by the bank of a pond, suggested by a modulation in the colour (Plates 3 and 7). The inner contact of the figures and the ground of the painting is made more explicit by architectural or scenic phantasies, conceived like a musical accompaniment (Plates 9 and 10, i.e. "Scenes from Omar Khayyam") by filling the picture with illustrative invention (Plate 6, "Buddha and Sujātā").* "L art

*About this painting "Buddha & Sujātā" Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, writes: "This picture was inspired by Sir Edwin Arnold's 'Light of Asia' and two lines from this book were quoted at the bottom of the picture: 'So thinking him Divine, Sujātā drew trembling night'. Here we have the huge guarled trunk of the Bodhi Tree—the big Peepul under which Buddha attained his supreme wisdom (Bodhi) pp. 512 and at the bottom of the tree trunk which presents a symphony in the brown, we have the

nouveau" yields to the rhythms of Omar Khayyam, played in an Indian mode. Curves are brittle, lines are traced by a brush of nerves; where horizontals predominate they bend under the weight of invisible load (Plate 10, "A scene from Omar Khayyam"). On the haze charged with sentiment is dispelled. Rajput paintings offer rectangular surfaces that are background to the figures, (Plates 2 and 5, "Summer" and "Rukhminī writing letter to Kṛṣṇa"). Their conventions, in the work of the master, balance the details of the Mughal miniatures and the dim spaces of his dream world. For these discoveries of Indian styles and periods, researches in technique prepared new ground. The Jaipur technique of wall-painting reduced to the surface the encumbrances of Western representation. "Kaca and Devayānī" (Plate 12) is Indian in form and technique. Stella Kramrisch points out that none of the later paintings by Abanindranath surpasses the quality of this panel.

According to some other artist and art-critic,²⁸ the unique genius of Abanindranath was revealed for the first time in his Rādhā Kṛṣṇa series of paintings (1895). The pictures, according to him, introduce a new epoch in Modern Indian painting. We see in the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa series the decorative forms of Indian and foreign paintings. Tagore's previous training in European technique had influenced the work and did not allow in them

figure of Buddha in yellow robes, his thin ascetic face after his long fast, spiritual, calm, and pensive, shimmering like a golden haze, beautiful as an angel's. Sujātā is kneeling in front of Buddha with a vase of water by her side and with bowed head she is folding her hands as a token of her great respect for the Master whom she has not as yet been able to recognise and thinks of him only as a sylvan God. Buddha's left hand is held up in the attitude of blessing her and in his right hand he holds the bowl with the rice-milk which Sujātā took so great pains to prepare as an offering of gratitude for having been blessed with a husband and a child and a joyful married life. The figure of Sujātā has been done in the most exquisite manner. She is dressed in the ancient Indian way as such as we find in the earlier Indian sculptures—a sari-like embroidered cloth draping her lower limbs, an *uttariya* or upper garment hanging loosely over her right shoulder. The two faces are wonderfully conceived". For Dr. Chatterjee the painting "seemed to concentrate in itself the beauty and poetry, the spirituality and the devotion to Ancient India".

the Indian decorative frame to remain absolutely pure. As a result, these pictures had become something which was neither a true European miniature nor an Indian decorative painting. Tagore as a "Syncrete" reveals himself here in so far as technique was concerned. This syncretism in style gave Tagore's art a peculiar language of its own. That is why the devout vaishnavite scholar, Mahatma Sisir Kumar Ghose was rather disappointed with the unconventional appearance of Rādhā and he wanted to see her a little more plump. But an Indian vaishnavite's reaction was not the same as that of an erudite christian moralist (like Mr. Lefevre), whom S. K. Chatterjee quotes* as saying "What do you find in this picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa?" Mr. Lefevre was completely ignorant of the myth of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as symbolizing the all-engrossing love of the human soul for the Divinity, a love which would rise superior to all social and man-made obstacles. Dr. Chatterjee considered this series of Bengal Vaishnava Lyrics on the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa "as being some of the best paintings ever painted on this great theme of mystic love". In contrast to Lefevre's appreciation of Tagore's works quoted above, we may cite the comments on Tagore's art by another great missionary, Sister Nivedita who helped revive the renascent Indian culture during the last century and early this century. While writing on Tagore's painting "Shah Jahan dreaming of the Taj", Sister Nivedita writes.²⁹

The last reflection of, the sunset has not yet died out of the Eastern sky. The young moon is high behind the clouds. And the emperor rides alone by the riverside to pray. Weeks, perhaps months, have gone by since that terrible moment of severance, when the two, who were as one, were divided for a time. The heart still quivers under the stress of the wound. And yet serenity is at its dawn; within the soul we behold the meeting place of pain and peace. Yonder on the far side of

*See his article "Abanindranath: Master-artist and Renovator" in the Golden Jubilee volume of the Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

the river, lies a grave, her grave. O flowing stream: O little tomb! How ice-cold to-night is the tent of the heart! A while hence, when the moon is gone, and all the world is wrapped in secrecy, Shah Jahan will ride across the ford and there dismount to kneel beneath the marble canopy and kiss with passionate kisses, the cold stones, that silent earth, that are as the hem of her garment to him who loves. A while hence, despair and longing will have overwhelmed him. But now he prays. With all the gravity and stateliness of a mohammedan sovereign, he faces up a down on horse back head bowed, hands quite on the reins and lost in thought. The heeling hand of his own strong religious faith has begun to make itself felt, in the man's life. The gleam of white marble speaks to him of rest. A throne could not lift her who is gone, as she is lifted in this shrine of death. How far has she been removed, above all the weariness and pain, the turbulence and mischance, of this mortal world! The soul that came to him out of the infinite, like a great white bird, bearing love and compassion on its wings is withdrawn once more into the bosom of God. The presence of this dust is in truth a conversation. The lamp of the home is extinguished but burns there not a light the more, before the altar? The wife, the mother, the queen is gone, but in heaven there kneels a saint before God, praying to Him for the beloved on earth.

This quoting in extenso reveals how a believer in renunciation of life could very well understand the significance and meaning of passionate love-theme, in its aesthetic excellence and metaphysical import. In her review of Tagore's "The passing of Shah Jahan" Sister Nivedita writes about³⁰ some "a priori" ideas (both historical and philosophical in nature) helpful for understanding the painting itself. Then she describes the picture content:

Jahanara weeps at her father's feet. All others have withdrawn, for no service remains to be rendered to the august captive. On the edge of the carpet lies only the shoes and regal helmet, put off for the last time. For Shah Jahan, the uses of the

world are ended. Silence and the night and the morning moon, half-veiled in her scarf of drifting cloud, envelop the sad face of the dying monarch. But Shah Jahan himself? To him the moment is glad with expectation. The sucking sound of the river below the bastions fills him with the sense of that other river beside which stands his soul. Ponder, beyond, the bend, like some ethereal white-veiled presence, stands the Taj—her Taj, her crown, the crown she wrought her. But to-night it is more than her crown. To-night it is herself. To-night she is there, in all her old-time majesty and sweetness, yet with an added holiness withal. (Herein we find a case of extended meaning of an art-content as imputed by the appreciator. Sister Nivedita projects her craze for holiness into the picture and reads a meaning which might not have been intended by the artist.) To-night, beyond the gentle lapping of the waters, every line of the stately form speaks tenderness and peace and all-enfolding holiness, waiting for that pilgrim—with weary feet, bent and head so bowed, alas! who comes leaving behind alike palace and prison, battlefield and cell of prayer, to land on the quiet shore on the yonder side of death.

The concluding lines of the review are intensely philosophical in nature and reveals a "*Saḥṛdaya hṛdaya saṁvādi*" in the critic who understands sympathetically and most profoundly the dignity of love that sustains man and woman in its mundane bearing. She concludes, "Truly a royal-passing this of Shah-Jahan! King in nothing so truly as in his palace in a woman's heart-crowed in this, the supreme moment, of her to whom he gave the crown of all the world".

Sister Nivedita, while reviewing Abanindranath's painting "*Bhāratamātā*" tells us:³¹ "we have here a picture which bids fare to prove the beginning of a new age in Indian art". Abanindranath, in his famous book *Gharoyā* told us that this painting was done at a moment of national resurgence when the whole nation was in ferment. The national outlook, the resurgent patriotism inspired the artist to scale new heights. To quote Nivedita again:

...using all the added means of expression which the modern period had bestowed upon him, the artist has here given expression nevertheless to a purely Indian idea, in Indian form. The curving line of lotuses and the white radiance of the halo are beautiful additions to the Asiatically-conceived figure with its four arms, as the symbol of the divine multiplication of power. This is the first masterpiece, in which an Indian artist has actually succeeded in disengaging, as it were, the spirit of Motherland—giver of faith and learning, of clothing and food—and portraying Her, as she appears to the eyes of Her children. What he sees in Her is here made clear to all of us,* Spirit of the Motherland, giver of all good, yet eternally virgin, eternally rapt from human sense in prayer and gift. The misty lotuses and the white light set her apart from the common world, as much as the four arms and Her infinite love. And yet in every detail, of Śaṅkha bracelet, and close-veiling garment of bare feet and open, sincere expression, is she not after all, our very own, heart of our heart, at once mother and daughter of the Indian land even as to the ṛṣis of the old was Uṣābālā, in her Indian girlhood, daughter of the dawn.

Her review³² of Tagore's "Captive Sītā" is equally engaging. The lore of Sītā comes down from the Rāmāyana, the great Indian epic. Sister Nivedita's opening remarks are worth reproducing: "The out-standing impression made by the picture is one of extraordinary mental intensity". Then she goes on telling us analytically the physiognomy of the pained Sītā: "The face is not perhaps chosen from amongst the most beautiful Indian types. The brow retreats and the neck is thick-features not usually characteristic of a Hindu woman". But the epic frailty discernible in the Sītā of the Rāmāyana is conspicuously absent in Tagore's creation. That is why Nivedita congratulates Tagore:

*His image of 'Mother India' could be compared to the celebrated images of Mother India as conceived by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore.

... on the strength of his portrayal. It can not be said too often that Sītā, as depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa is first a great woman and only afterwards a great wife. In this picture, with its noble proportions and splendid vigour, we see that Sītā who could laugh at hardships and burn with her disdain Rāvaṇa himself. We catch a glimpse even of the woman of the last great scene of wounded withdrawal, before the popular insult.

Then Sister Nivedita goes on to describe the composition of the picture and tells us of the uniqueness of the same. It was the vision of the artist which gave it the singularity for which it was widely acclaimed. To quote Nivedita again:

Mr. Tagore has wisely chosen his own setting for the captive Sītā. He has placed her behind bars, looking out, in the infinite longing of the dawn, over the water of the ocean. This visualises her imprisonment and sadness, as the garden of Asoka trees, on the banks of the river, could never have done. It is impossible in the photographs, to catch the extraordinary beauty of the sunrise sky, as it is given in the original.

Then the reviewer discovers the tone of Ideality permeating the whole composition:

But the ideal lives for us at last. The Indian Madonna has found a form. In ages to come, each great painter, may create his own particular presentment of Sītā, even as in Europe we can tell, from something in the manner of the picture, whether Holy Family is by Raphael or Leonardo da Vinci, by Correggio or Botticelli. But at least nothing can ever again be accepted, which is not psychologically Sītā. In the strong and noble womanhood, in the regal pride brought low and the hoping yet despairful wifehood, of this Sītā, by Mr. Tagore, we have achieved something too deeply satisfying for us again to be contented without an effort in its direction.

In Tagore we found a syncretic style compounded of the delicacy of Moghul portraiture and the spatial quality of Japanese painting exquisitely balanced by the discipline of the Western technique. The Japanese technique of the repetitive colour wash is quite pronounced in the "Yakṣas of the Upper Air". Illustrations of the *Rubāiyāt* also bear the stamp of this Japanese influence. The English technique of the colour wash has often been combined with the Japanese. A study of the sculpture of Orissa induced a further plasticity in his maturing style: the colour works attained more "body" and the figures became further quieter. The well-known specimens illustrative of this new direction are "Tisarakshitā" and the "End of the Journey". Thus we find in Tagore a fusion of many a stream and yet his stamp of originality claiming the creations to be his own. He evolved a new style of painting as is evident in the paintings cited above. Where his technique was concerned, he could be alone. But he was not strangled enough, even alone there. He founded a school. Where he was an aesthetic thinker he had many parallels amongst the contemporaries and the ancients as well. But his intuitions as an artist were unparalleled. This unique intuitions gave him all the grandeur that he could claim as a creative artist. This gave the final shape to his technique and style. That is how, having many parallels, he could claim some novelty in his style as well. (Here it is evident that we do not believe in the Crocean identity of intuition and expression.) The expression, as we find in Tagore, was either done through words (he was a great literary artist) or through picture-language and conveyed ideas which could be traced to or compared with ideas of people belonging to different periods of history and different schools of thought; yet his originality was to be recognised as such. Being original in his outlook and creations he left as well enormous scope for the institution of a comparative study in his aesthetic theories and it is evident from what has been said before.

However, while attempting to determine the unique nature of this creative activity of the artist (so eloquently demonstrated in the paintings quoted above)³³ we may examine Abanindranath's postulation of the hypothesis of art as play and this brings

us to the question (4) posed above (p. 209). This "art as play" theory is well-known with the thinkers in the West. Abanindranath could not accept this Western concept of "play" to be compatible with the autonomous nature of art qua art. His formulation of the idea and determination of the relation between art and play bore the hall-mark of his peculiar aesthetic thinking. We may consider him, while enunciating the *lilā* theory, to have taken a position (purpose of art) analogous to the Kantian concept of "purposiveness without a purpose".

Concept of 'Lilā': Croce, Gassirer & Schiller Compared

Having a different intellectual and cultural context from that of Kant and Schiller, Abanindranath Tagore, formulated the principle of *lilā* as contradistinguished from the concept of *Khela* on the one hand and work on the other. In attempting a proper appraisal of the genesis of art, aestheticians have delved deeper into human psyche, and some are of opinion that art has its origin in the region of the "silent mind" as opposed to the "verbal mind". There are others who think that the urge for artistic creation is conscious, and as such art is brought forth as a result of the artist's conscious effort. If we consider art as a conscious creation or as some form of active creation, then certainly the question to be answered is;* What urged this creation? The motive of the artist remains to be explained. If the artist has any motive extraneous to the nature of art, then art suffers in its virtue as art. Masters like Tolstoy who believed in the missionary activities of "people's art" are no more heard with interest now-a-days. So a principle of explanation had to be found quite consistent with the autonomous nature of art, without explaining away the empirical evidences. Art, it is agreed has no pronounced purpose and again it serves some useful purpose unknowingly. This character of art as not being consciously didactic and at the same time being moral was

*A. E. Housman and others considered art to be some form of passive activity. See Housman's *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. This characterisation of art admittedly sidetracks the issue of the artist's motivation in his creation.

brought out by Croce and this was in agreement with *Abanindranath and Rabindranath*.

Benedetto Croce found a principle which virtually reconciled the art for art's sake theory with theories having a moralistic or didactic bias. He virtually brings in the concept of whole man as expressed through art. His idea of feelings being in art here means those feelings as reflecting and colouring the empire Morality of man. So in the context of modern Indian aesthetics Croce's words in point are quite significant:³⁴

We must rather hold firmly to the doctrine of art for art's sake, yet at the same time emphasise a vital condition, not always made sufficiently clear, but often overlooked because it was implied as a presupposition. This oversight has never been remedied because the keen intellectual climate in which the truth was first recognised, mentally, vigorously and normally earnest, made it seem something so obvious and so natural that there was no need to insist upon it or to elaborate it in formal arguments and defend it on philosophical and critical grounds. The vital condition of art's autonomy is simply the essential unity of the human spirit which, in its various activities, is never disintegrated so as to let each drift in isolation, but is itself always present as the pilot at the helm. A man would not be moral without the capacities for reason and imagination, for intellectual and artistic experience; he could not philosophise unless he had a strain of poetry a strong and delicate conscience, each several activity draws its specific energy from the spiritual unity, morality, purely moral, rejecting the inroads of sophistic logic, the other, purely speculative, uncontaminated by misplaced edification. So too, it is impossible to be a poet or an artist without being in the first place a man nourished by thought and by experience of moral ideals and conflicts. Though art is neither the slave nor the handmaid of morality or philosophy, it is always busied with both, for its business is that of the spiritual unity which in it comes to its own as necessary and unique manifestation. This is the reason why we find in all genuine poets, in all ages and all nations, that breath of sublimity, that which

lifts us on its strong wing to the universal and eternal, an elevation and expansion lacking in the sensual impressionistic art which leaves the spectator on the earth depressed and disillusioned, mainly seeking for something that constantly eludes him. . . . When shall we meet again or do we ever meet the whole man with his search, which is already a finding, for purity and goodness? Only when we again turn our eyes to the heavens and love again the things that are lovely and know how to work and suffer and sacrifice for their sake. Until we do that we may have the desire but not the realisation of the joy of beauty.

Croce's formulation of the view of art as being the expression of the whole man, his realisation and his joy make it easy to synthesise the freedom in art and its moralistic, didactic, or utilitarian character. Thus he offers us a principle of explanation which would go a long way in reconciling many of the conflicting and warring views of art. So the play theory as formulated by Tagore accommodated many conflicting ideas. It may be noted that there were objections raised against the identification of art and play³⁵ or against the consideration of art as play. But play looked upon as the mysterious activity which occupies the working and waking hours of children has great resemblance to art, considered not as magic art nor as amusement art. Children play and this play is indefinable* and mysterious. So the artists also play with their different art-forms with a purpose undefined and indefinable. Freedom from practical ends binds together art and play. Their common tendency to simulation, or in the very largest sense, the ideal treatment of reality, links them together. The play impulse, writes Bosanquet,³⁶ is in short only aesthetic where its primarily negative freedom is charged with a content which demands imaginative expression, and any impulse which takes such a form is aesthetic.

*Margret Lowenfeld's in her *Play in Childhood* has discovered strange facts about child's play. Her discoveries go to show the identity of art and play.

So Bosanquet's idea of negative freedom in his concept of "play" as "charged with a content which demands imaginative expression" leads to the domain of aesthetic values. Tagore did not believe in the idea of negative freedom as he considered art to be a conscious activity. So *Lilā* for him, was conscious too. (This is quite consistent with Tagore's idea of art as expression of the total human personality.) As such it was for him to be free as an artist was to enjoy positive freedom, i.e. *ānanda*. That is why Abanindranath distinguished this *Lilā* from Sport (*Khelā*). According to Tagore, *Khelā* or Sport is not the true characterisation of art, as men take to different types of sport at different age-levels. Sport has a reference to age-group, and a fondness for particular³⁷ sport at an earlier age can be overcome at a later age. Thus self-transcendence is the character of sport, whereas *Lilā* or play in Tagore's view has a stability through changes and a universal appeal. Art as sport (*Khelā*) has been decried by pedants and was unacceptable to Abanindranath as well. Abanindranath's *Lilā* was the fountainhead of pure sensuous forms, and in the formulation of this concept he was a syncretist. His parallel may be found in Earnest Cassirer³⁸ who speaks of three kinds of imagination: the power of invention, the power of personification and the power to produce pure sensuous forms. In play (specially that of a child) we find the two former powers but the third. The child plays with things, the artist plays with forms, with lines and design, rhythms and melodies. In a playing child we admire the facility and quickness of transformation. The greatest tasks are performed with the scantiest means. Any piece of wood may be turned into a living being. Nevertheless, this transformation signifies only a metamorphosis of the objects themselves; it does not mean a metamorphosis of objects into forms. In play we merely rearrange and redistribute the materials given to sense perception. Art is constructive and creative in another and a deeper sense. A child at play does not live in the same world of rigid empirical facts as the adult. The child's world has a much greater mobility and transmutability, yet the playing child, nevertheless, does no more than exchange the actual things of his environment for other possible things. No

such exchange as this characterises genuine artistic activity. Here the requirement is much more severe. For the artist dissolves the hard stuff of things in the crucible of his imagination and the result of this process is the discovery of a new world of poetical, musical, or plastic forms. To be sure, a great many ostensible works of art are very far from satisfying this requirement. It is the task of the aesthetic judgment or of artistic taste to distinguish between a genuine work of art and those other spurious products which are indeed playthings or at most the response to the demand for entertainment. A closer analysis of the psychological origin and psychological effects of play and art leads to the same conclusion. Play gives us diversion and recreation but it also serves a different purpose. Play has a general biological relevance in so far as it anticipates future activities. It has often been pointed out that the play of a child has a propaedeutic value. In art there is neither diversion nor preparation. The function of fine art cannot be accounted for in this manner.

When art was taken to be *Khelā* or sport, there came religious sanctions against paintings; it was condemned for it was considered to be some form of sport prompted by a love for frolic.* This crusade against fine arts has been a recurring feature in human history. How then art survives the onslaught of all these opposing forces? In Tagore's opinion, this crusade against art is a crusade against art as sport (*Khelā*), and not against art as play (*Līlā*). When art is looked upon as a favourite pursuit to fill up one's leisure, it is not the *Līlā* or play in Tagore's sense; it is mere *Khelā* or sport, as it implies no inner necessity, the necessity that makes the artist restless and without peace. (The classic example of this restlessness may be found in Vālmiki, the epic poet, when he was blessed with the maiden rhyme.) Pursuit of art as sport might be a temporary phase in the individual life, but art as play-impulse is laid deep in

*Tagore refers to Islamic scriptures which uphold such sanctions. To quote Tagore: "There was a time when Islam laid strict injunction on portrait painting". He also refers to similar sanctions in Hindu scriptures (Bagiswari Lectures, p. 258).

our nature and its roots have struck into the very being of our existence. That art is universal and this universality in art also distinguished this play from other forms of sport. The spirit that prompts human hobbies is absent in *Lilā*. Whereas it is the guiding force in all forms of *Khelā*. *Lilā* is characterised by internal necessity whereas *Khelā* may be prompted by a necessity external to it.³⁹

Tagore's distinction of *Khelā* and *Lilā* compares favourably Santayana's distinction in point. George Santayana distinguished between work on the one hand, and play, in its twin types, on the other:⁴⁰ "We may call everything play which is useless activity, exercise that springs from the physiological impulse to discharge the energy which the exigencies of life have not called out. Work will then be all action that is necessary or useful for life". Evidently if work and play are thus objectively distinguished as useful and useless action, work is an eulogistic term and play a disparaging term. It would be better for us that all our energy should be turned to account, that none of it should be wasted in aimless motion. Play, in this sense, is a sign of imperfect adaptation. It is proper to childhood, when the body and mind are not yet fit to cope with the environment; but it is unseemly in manhood and pitiable in old age, because it marks an atrophy of human nature and a failure to take hold of the opportunities of life (cf. Tagore's concept of *Khelā*). Play is thus essentially frivolous. Some persons (and certainly Abanindranath is one of them), understanding the term in this sense, have felt an aversion, which every liberal mind will share, to classing social pleasures, art and religion under the head of play by that epithet condemning them, as certain school seems to do, to gradual extinction as the race approaches maturity At the same time there is undeniable propriety in calling all the liberal and imaginative activities of man as "play", because they are spontaneous and not carried on under pressure of external necessity or danger. Their utility for self-preservation may be very indirect but they are not worthless for that very reason (cf. Abanindranath's concept of *Lilā*). On the contrary, we may measure the degree of happiness of its civilisation which is devoted to force and generous pursuits, to the adornment of

life and the culture of the imagination. For it is in the spontaneous play of his faculties that man finds himself and his happiness. Work and play, according to Santayana, take on a different meaning and become equivalent to servitude and freedom. While play (*Līlā* for Abanindranath) means "freedom", work means "servitude".

Tagore's *Līlā* is not the spontaneous outburst or overflow of excessive energy, (as has been sought to be made out by Schiller⁴¹ and Herbert Spencer⁴² in their play theories). This *Līlā* of Abanindranath is all consuming. It bears within itself the eternal dissatisfaction of the artist with the existing limited forms. He seeks to express the eternal all-abiding forms of Beauty. Any recognition of his failure leads him from old forms to newer forms of expression. He is always experimenting with newer techniques of externalisation of his subjective feelings. This failure is accompanied by a feeling of pain, the pain that paradoxically sustains the artist through all his failures, past and present. This pain characterises all great works of art. Man's intense thirst for beauty aches and it inspires his creation.⁴³ The primitive men, Tagore points out, in the Aurignacian age drew human faces in order to satisfy this urge for creation. They were specimens of crude drawing. This primitive art tradition came down to us through the Solutrian and Magdalenian ages and underwent radical changes in course of human history. This evolution in art was mainly due to conscious human enterprise.⁴⁴

In this context of *Līlā* as art we may note that none of the specific qualities and conditions of the work of art (as conceived by Abanindranath) was missing in *Līlā*. Konrad Lange,⁴⁵ and some other modern thinkers may be taken to be approximating Abanindranath in this regard. According to these thinkers, there is not a single characteristic of such games which could not also be found in art. But we may note here that all these arguments are negative in "their inception". Psychologically speaking, play and art bear a close resemblance to each other. They are non-utilitarian and unrelated to any practical end. In play as in art we leave behind us our immediate practical needs in order to give our world a new shape. But this analogy

was not sufficient to prove a real identity. Artistic imagination always remains sharply distinguished from that sort of imagination which characterises our play activity (Even when it had some inner necessity). In play we have to do with simulated images which may become so vivid and impressive as to be taken for realities. To define art as a mere sum of such simulated images would indicate a very meagre conception of its character and task. What we call "Aesthetic semblance" is not the same phenomenon that we experience in games of illusion. Play gave us illusive images and art gave us a new kind of truth, a truth not of empirical things but of pure forms. But Tagore's *Līlā* gave us such truth of pure forms; so it was identical with aesthetic activity. In another context⁴⁶ Abanindranath describes art as '*Śakh*', which comes close to his idea of *Līlā* in so far as its free purposiveness was concerned. It spoke of no didactic purpose; nor was it instructive. *Śakh* comes from within and it had nothing to do with the stimulus from without. It had no set rules or procedures to follow. Tagore illustrates, his *Śakh* by citing the case of his taking lessons on '*Esraj*' from Ustad Kanailal Dehri. This went on for some time and Tagore gave it up as it did not come from within. What prompted him to play the *Esraj* was a desire to be a master in the line. It was ambition and not *Śakh* and as such it was purposive. So it had no roots in the nature of the artist and as such it faded gradually. But in so far as painting was concerned it was a matter of *Śakh* and it came easy with him. So art was *Śakh* and art was *Līlā* with Tagore, both connoting a rooting into the fundamentals of the artist's being qua artist.

When aesthetic activity is thus related to and roots into very being of man, it cannot be considered to be some sort of an unconscious activity. For, in that case, the artist will not have much of responsibility in matters of artistic creations. If it is not a conscious activity, the responsibility of the artist ceases in creating the art-forms. This point was repeatedly emphasised by the existentialists, and that is why they were anti-Freudian. Tagore, similarly held the artists responsible for their work and as such admits an element of conscious effort as a logical corollary to his theory of art as play which is essen-

tially active he again calls it *Sāadhanā*. It ceaselessly aims at creating beautiful forms wherein he wants to instal his response to the call of the real.⁴⁷ So Tagore's *Lilā* is characterised by some inner necessity which makes the production of artistic forms inevitable. An artist must create, if he is capable of creating, i.e. if he is an artist at all. Here Tagore comes very close to Sartre in the enunciation of this position.

Now we may summarise our observations of Tagore's notion of art as *Lilā* or *Śakh*. (a) The inner necessity in *Lilā* is not contrary to the artist's freedom. If self-determination is considered compatible with freedom then certainly⁴⁸ Tagore is not inconsistent in his play theory by the postulation of the internal necessity. (b) His theory of *Lilā* makes artistic creation an intensely conscious activity. Thereby accomodating proper aesthetic detachment⁴⁹ without which no artistic creation was possible. Tagore distinguished between interested and disinterested⁵⁰ outlooks or life, and in his opinion, the artist's outlook was disinterested or detached. (c) *Lilā* is unmotivated. The instinct of possession and other self-regarding instincts are totally dormant when the artist creates. Self-interestedness is contrary to the nature of art as a free activity. (d) This detachment and absence of self-interest in art on the part of the artist do not save him from a gripping pain of frustration and failure when his artistic forms look inadequate to the prototype in his imagination, (i.e. the intuited image). Curiously enough, this sense of intense pain due to his failure sustains him and inspires him to take to fresh experiments. Thus art evolves new forms and all these transitions from one form to another are fraught with painful tales of the agonised mind of a Picasso or of an Abanindranath. Rabindranath, uncle of the master artist very well expressed Abanindranath's "artistic pain" when he wrote:

This is no mere play,
This is the intense pain
When my heart burns.

The artist's eternal thirst for beauty⁵¹ makes him unhappy. (e) The ideal treatment of reality by the artist helps this identi-

fication of art and *Līlā*. *Līlā* entails much selection and rejection from the storehouse of nature by the artist⁵² to enable him to play with the form as he chose them to be. We may say with Abanindranath, that artist presents an "ennobled nature", "the real idealised" and thus guarantees artist's freedom. His notion of art as *Līlā* prompted his denial of copy theory in art.⁵³ The artist, to quote Tagore, is like an adept garden whose skill rests on selecting the right type of flowers for the bouquet and for the garland. (f) Beauty is the realm of play and appearance. It is the unification of the spiritual and the sensuous. The "sensuous" comes from nature whereas the "spiritual" is the signification form given by the artist to the selected and embellished nature. (g) Tagore's unqualified acceptance of the "*Niyati kṛta niyamarahita*" dictum finds in him the unification of Kantian necessity and freedom.⁵⁴ Tagore's *Līlā* theory and his idea of *Śakh* are a guarantee of this freedom so essential for art.⁵⁵ (Schiller, another great exponent of play theory, writes in his *Letters upon the Aesthetical Education of man* guaranteeing this freedom of art and of the artist: "The idea of an instructive fine art improving art is no less contradictory, for nothing agrees less with the idea of the beautiful than to give a determinate tendency to the mind".⁵⁶ This determinate tendency of mind is alien to the autonomy of art.⁵⁷ This idea of freedom necessarily determines Tagore's idea of beauty and its detailed discussion follows in the pages to follow.

Tagore's Philosophy of Beauty

Herein we propose to discuss Abanindranath's ideas on beauty in detail and to note the implication of his observation on the nature of art in the present context. It would be interesting to begin this discussion on beauty (in order to understand the problem in proper perspective) with a reference to Susanne K. Langer.⁵⁸ She poses the question: "What distinguishes a work of art from a 'mere' artifact?" And her reply is: "Its beauty". She tells us that this reply involves "begging the question" since artistic value is beauty in the broadest sense. She goes on telling us that bean pots and wooden buckets often

have what artists call "a good shape", i.e. they are in no way offensive to the eye. Yet without being at all ugly, they are insignificant, commonplace, non-artistic rather than inartistic. What do they lack, that a work of art—even a humble, domestic Greek vase—possesses? Quoting a well known critic,⁵⁹ Susanne Langer tells us, "Significant Forms" is the one quality common to all works of visual art. L. A. Reid extends the scope of this characteristic to all art whatsoever. For him beauty is just expressiveness and the true aesthetic form is expressive form.⁶⁰ Roger Fry accepts the term "Significant Form" though he frankly cannot define its meaning. From the contemplation of (say) a beautiful pot and as an effect of its harmony of time and texture and colour, "there comes to us", he says, "a feeling of purpose; we feel that all these sensually logical conformities are the outcome of a particular feeling, or of what for want of a better word, we call an idea: and we may even say that the pot is the expression of an idea in the artist's mind". After many efforts to define the notion of artistic expressive, Roger Fry concludes:⁶¹

I seem to be unable at present to get beyond this vague adumbration of significant form. Flaubert's expression of the idea seems to me to correspond exactly to what I mean, but alas! he never explained, and probably could not, what he meant by the idea. There is a strong tendency to-day to treat art as a significant phenomenon rather than a pleasurable experience, a gratification of the senses. This is probably done to the free use of dissonance and so-called "ugliness" by our leading artists.

Ugliness has been taken to be a disvalue and not a nonvalue. The ugly finds a place in modern art; ancient Indian *śilpa śāstra* cognised ugly to be an object of art and ancient Indian paintings and sculptures demonstrated the truth of this assertion. It may also be due in some measure, Langer points out, to the striking indifference of the uneducated masses to the artistic value. In the past ages, Susanne Langer goes on to tell us, these masses had no access to great works of art; music and painting and

even books were the pleasures of the wealth; it could be assumed that the poor and the vulgar would enjoy art, if they could have it. But now since everybody can read, visit museums and hear great music at least over the radio, the judgement of the masses on these things has become a reality and has made it quite obvious that great art is not a direct sensuous pleasure. If it were, it would appeal like cakes or cocktails—to the untutored as well as to the cultured taste. This fact, together with the intrinsic “unpleasantness” of such contemporary art, would naturally weaken any theory that treated art as pure pleasure. Add to this the current logical and psychological interest in symbolism, in expressive media and the articulation of ideas and we need not look far afield for a new philosophy of art, based upon the concept of “Significant Form”. But the question has to be answered: What is artistic significance? ‘and’ what sort of meaning do expressive forms express? Langer’s answers to these baffling questions are interesting. She tells us:⁶² interest in represented objects and interest in the visual or verbal structures that depict them are always getting hopelessly entangled. Yet I believe, ‘artistic meaning’ belongs to the sensuous construct as such; this alone is beautiful and contains all that contributes to its beauty”. Thus when Susanne Langer virtually admits of the importance of the sensuous form as conveying some artistic meaning, she comes very close to Abanindranath whose identification of truth, beauty, and art has already been noted. But for Abanindranath, the problem remains whether we should consider this artistic meaning to be a meaning for me alone or is it sharable or communicable? In other words, we may ask whether for Abanindranath beauty was subjective or objective?

According to Abanindranath beauty is both subjective and objective. It is objective in the Platonic sense, i.e. in every art-object, (While being produced) the artist seems to adumbrate his a priori idea of beauty. This explains the artist’s dissatisfaction with his own creation and art work may be considered a ‘discovery’ from this view-point. Again it is subjective, when it seeks to transcend the ‘given’, this ‘given’ may be the ideal a priori to all experience or it might have been gleaned from experience as such. This idea of beauty as objective also tends

to explain the phenomenon of art-schools developing irrespective of geographical boundaries. When we think of abstract art, we find these geographical boundaries transcended. They seek to adumbrate some forms; and these forms are unfamiliar with common men and women. In abstract art, the "subject" matter is either left out (abstract in appearance) or it is replaced by "abstract content" (abstract in conception). The second type of abstract art is possible if we take beauty to be objective. This type of abstract art is divorced from all reference to experimental contents whatsoever. They could only be explained with reference to some idea of beauty *a priori*. This objectivity of beauty again helps us to explain the evolution in art. And Tagore told us of the "Supremely Beautiful". However, we will note, in the pages to follow, (a) his concept of Imitation and the idea of *Lābanya Yojanam*, (b) his concept of artistic freedom, (c) his ideas of harmony and dissonance, (d) his consideration of the language of beauty and its communicability and universality (e) his idea of distance, both physical and psycical, and (f) his consideration of also as important in deciding beauty as a value. So both space (distance) and time were taken to be determinate of the beautiful. In a way, Alexander's idea of "S-T" as constituting the essence of reality was presupposed to indicate that beauty was determined by space and time. All these factors contributed largely to determine the nature of beauty, as understood by Abanindranath. The popular idea of beauty was such as to give it a rounded objectivity. May be, the imperfection of language, ordinarily used, lent then notion the beauty was objective, i.e. it is there in space, outside and independent of the viewer. So objectivity of beauty is one of the main theses of Tagore as well and this idea of beauty as objective helped him explain some of the intricate problems of aesthetics. Beauty in nature and beauty in art could be traced to the "Supremely Beautiful" as their source and genesis.

His notion of the "Supremely Beautiful"⁶³ is objective and in that sense could be described as somewhat Platonic. It is absolute in nature and its faint adumbrations are to be found in the beauties of nature and art. It is necessarily outside of "me" and not dependent on "me". The truth of art is *a priori*

and objective. It is beheld as the "Idea of Plato" is beheld, as the *a priori* ideal truth, which leads all charm and significance to the truth of flesh, to the *a posteriori* experienced truths of facts which we hear, see or touch, by our senses. Sri Aurobindo,⁶⁴ the philosopher-saint characterises this objective beauty as "Eternal Beauty". Eternal beauty wandering on her way does that wandering by a multitudinous variation of forms appealing to a multitudinous variation of consciousness. There comes in the difficulty. Each individual consciousness tries to seize the eternal beauty expressed in a form, but is either assisted by the form or repelled by it, wholly attracted or wholly repelled or partially attracted or partially repelled. There may be errors in the poet's or artist's transcription of beauty which mar the reception, but even these have different effects on different people. But the more radical divergences arise from the variation in the constitution of the mind and its responses. Moreover, there are minds, the majority indeed, who do not respond, to "artistic" beauty at all—something inartistic appeals much more to what the sense of beauty they possess—or else they are not seeking beauty, but only vital pleasure. But the favoured children of Muse-Mousa, though they are in the minority, tried and have been trying through centuries to translate this idea of beauty or "Eternal Beauty" in suitable forms and there are brilliant achievements to the credit of man in this particular field. According to this view, man's creation and appreciation of beauty is a gradual process of discovery. In order to explain this position we may quote the relevant lines from Joad (to understand the Platonic position):⁶⁵

While Plato makes an important contribution to our knowledge of the nature of aesthetic experience, the distinguishing feature of his theory of aesthetics is his insistence upon the fact that such experience, whether it be creative or merely, appreciative is always in its essential nature a process of discovery. There is, Plato affirms, a Form of Beauty; (cf. Abanindranath's idea of *Parama Sundara*) by following an appropriate training we can achieve a knowledge of the form; This form of Beauty

is objective, in the sense of being "outside of us, and independent of us".

It is supremely beautiful. Beauty in art and nature may be called the "distorted versions of this Supreme Beauty" (as conceived by Tagore, in the previous section we have explained it in detail). Man's enterprise is to approach this abode of beauty. Abanindranath tells us that the artist's pilgrimage is towards this goal. But the pilgrim's progress always falls far short of the ideal and this truth was realised in Greece, Egypt, China, and India.⁶⁶ Everywhere the notion of the "Absolute Beauty" guides the destiny of the art-movements. When an artist thinks that he had reached finality in form, that he has touched the "Supremely Beautiful" through his art and sits contented the dynamic movement of art led by others overtakes him. He becomes a back number. That is how Dürer could lead the art movement in Germany when it had a seemingly final shape in the hands of Leonardo. Dürer had much of Leonardo's scientific and intellectual equipment. Unto his harsh native German realism he grafted something of Italian scholarship.⁶⁷ Like the Flemish artists, he had none of the Italian grace, but unlike them he tried hard to catch at some of the Italian nobility. In most of Dürer's works one feels that the mediaeval world was not far below the surface, though it rarely broke through. The movement did not stop at that; old forms gave place to the new ones. New schools developed, agreeing with and differing from the older schools. The mediaeval world peeped through Dürer's work. "Monet, at the end of his life, was producing work that had a strange resemblance to Turner's though he arrived at it by a different set of means"⁶⁸ Monet's "Rouen Cathedral" is an instance in point. The west front of the Cathedral, seen through the red haze of sunset by the analytical eye of Monet was like the same scene viewed by the romantic eye of Turner. These glimpses into the history of art amply justify Tagore's remark that man's imagination and with it his art-creation are ever-progressing towards the Supremely Beautiful—one movement leading to another, a great inspires the artist to create new forms, wherein it is sought to be adumbrated.

This adumbration entails falsification and distortion of the Beautiful (that stands apart from all references to technique or form or apparition as eternal and spiritual). The beauty that we see in nature⁶³ and art is a sort of imperfect imitation of the supremely Beautiful. Due to this weakness and deficiency in imitation, the world looks ugly or beautiful. Wherein the adumbration is successfully done it looks somewhat beautiful and where it is not so adumbrated, it is ugly. So these aesthetic values are determinated with reference to the Idea of Beauty.

We may note that this adumbration, which entails falsification and distortion, leaves room for subjectivity in art. It gives an artist the much needed freedom for creation. So the artist is allowed freedom although the distant referent of his artistic form might be the objective idea of Beauty. So Tagore had no difficulty in accepting the objectivity of beauty and at the same time pointing out the singular subjectivity of aesthetic creations. Like the existentialists, of course, he did not maintain that subjectivity was truth. But we may, on closed scrutiny, discover that Tagore's idea of transcendence of nature is art does heavily lean on this subjective character of aesthetic creation. Sartre, for example, speaks of the indeterminate character of the work of art and tells us that all human behaviour shares this characteristic of indeterminateness (for him, there being no ideal *a priori*). So subjectivity and freedom were their hall-mark in art-work and in the general human behaviour as well. Abanindranath, though not an existentialist, accepted this element of indeterminateness (subjectivity) in artistic creation⁷⁰ and sought to effect a synthesis between this indeterminateness in art and objectivity of beauty.

Idea of beauty, in a case, again was determined by time and place. A stag is charmed with one kind of reed-pipe music and the snake is charmed with another kind. This difference in taste means all the differences not only in man but in the animal world as well. The army band on the Calcutta maidan, again, is a misfit in a temple. The Church choir is a misfit in an opera house. Again, time determines our likes and dislikes which in their turn determine the nature of beauty. Distance, both physical and psychical, largely influences our notion of the

beautiful. Detachment, as we all know, is the most important factor for seeing beauty in objects. So we find that much of the objectivity of beauty wears away. It loses its so-called absolute objective character and depends on the subject for its visible arresting form. So beauty is invested with personalism. Our education, culture, taste, in a word, our personal dispositions, determine what is beautiful.⁷¹ The idea of beauty is always accompanied by an agreeable feeling. That is another pointer to the fact that creation or appreciation of beauty is subjective. We never call anything beautiful which does not agree with our mental prepossessions. Our attitude towards the beautiful must be a pleasant one. Herbert Read like Tagore also stresses this aspect of pleasure in our appreciation of the beautiful.

Rasa and Rūpabheda

A critic⁷² while discussing the views of the Indian Alamkārikas, points out that the soul of poetry lives neither in the structure and form, nor in the technique and ornamentation of poetry. The soul of poetry is *Rasa*. The word *Rasa* in Sanskrit is used in a variety of meanings. In common parlance its formulation in the *Vaiśeṣika* system it is used for the quality, cognisable through the sense of taste. As such it is of six kinds, sweet, sour, selfish, etc. In *Āyurvēda* it is used for a certain white liquid, extracted by the digestive system from the food. Its main seat is the heart. Therefrom it proceeds to arteries and nourishes the whole system. It also stands for liquid in general, extracted from any fruit, or flower; inclination, liking or desire, mineral or metallic salt and mercury. In the context of aesthetics, however, it stands for the "aesthetic object". It has a highly technical meaning in Indian aesthetics when it is characterised as the Absolute. But ordinarily it retains the element of original meaning, namely the object of relish, not sensuous but aesthetic. Tagore tells us that in relishing the "object of relish", of course, aesthetic equipoise is not lost. Mental balance or equilibrium suggests detachment. This aspect was not lost sight of when Wordsworth defined poetry as "emotions recollected in tranquillity". That can never be considered as "beautiful" which grates

on our imagination. To quote Read again: "But all artists have this same intention, the desire to please; and art is most simply and most usually defined as an attempt to create pleasing forms. Such forms satisfy our sense of beauty and the sense of beauty is satisfied when we are able to appreciate the unity or harmony of formal relations among our sense perceptions".⁷³ In this unity of the different parts of the aesthetic object resides the principle of beauty.⁷⁴ But multiplicity was equally important, for Tagore. In a different context, while emphasising the importance of "diversity in unity" Abanindranath discusses *rūpabheda* and tries to analyse the concept of "beauty" and its diverse significance. To quote his words:⁷⁵

Nanu Jñānāni bhindanti; it is *jñāna*, the perceiving faculty of our mind, which gives real diversity to forms. The same womanly form to me appears as mother, to my uncle as sister, to my father as wife, to some one else as daughter and to many others as friend or neighbour. If we copy such a form merely with the help of our eyes, it will remain only a woman and nothing more; but to paint a mother or a sister, our mind—the creator of true differences—must act on the form, change its appearance and impart of it the essential qualities of motherhood, sisterhood, etc.

So virtually Abanindranath seems to refuse to accept this motherhood, sisterhood, etc., in the picture either as primary or secondary quality. It is no "*Lokasana*" of the picture objectively. It is a projection of our mind. It is an idea "desubjectified and externalised" there on the canvas. Every art work is thus invested with a plurality of suggestions. There is multiplicity in the unity of the work, in so far as its suggestiveness is concerned.

Thus the aesthetic function of the mind is not only to discover unity in multiplicity but to find multiplicity in unity as well. George Santayana⁷⁶ (in the context of the idea of infinity) speaks like Tagore of this aesthetic function of mind at length and his analysis gives out a position quite close to Abanindranath's. Let us quote him when he speaks of the stars which illustrate "multiplicity in unity":

To most people I fancy, the stars are beautiful, but if you asked why, they would be at a loss to reply, until they remembered what they had heard about astronomy and the great size and distance and possible habitation of those Orbs.

Now the starry heavens are very happily designed to intensify the sensations on which their beauties must rest. In the first place the continuum of space is broken into points, numerous enough to give the utmost idea of multiplicity and yet so distinct and vivid that it is impossible not to remain aware of their individuality. The variety of local signs, without becoming organised into forms, remains prominent and irreducible. This makes the object infinitely more exciting than a plane surface would be. In the second place, the sensuous contrast of the dark background—blacker the dearer the night and the more stars we can see,—with the palpitating fire of the stars themselves, could not be exceeded by any possible device. This material beauty adds incalculably (as we have already pointed out) to the inwardness and sublimity of the effect. In a word, the infinity which moves us is the sense of multiplicity in uniformity.

So in a way, disorganisation, though implicitly, lends a diversion to the beautiful object and makes it come close to the sublime. It is quite patent that this "new dimension" is a projection of the *Sahṛdaya* (appreciator) and hence subjective.

Abanindranath goes on to explain his position further:⁷⁷

Our mind grows in true knowledge of forms *rūpabhēda*, through many experiences. To ignore this mind and to depend chiefly on the power of sight, is to see and depict the insignificant side of *rūpa*. In fact, forms in this external sense are without beauty and without ugliness, only when our mind has come into contact with them do they appear as either beautiful or ugly to us. There is such a thing as *ruci* in every *rupa* (form). *Ruci*, literally means a 'beam of light' or the lustre of loveliness. Mind, as well as everything that stands before the mind, is shining with this quality of *ruci* when the *ruci* that is within us and the *ruci* which

is in the objects without us, have come to an agreement and harmony, then and only then has a thing appeared to us beautiful or pleasing; the reversal of this order creates the sensation of ugliness or displeasure. (Here again Tagore as an aesthetic hedonist comes close to Santayana.) It is commonly said that two in disagreement will always appear to each other limping; the same thing happens in the case of agreement or disagreement of *rucis*. As soon as a form is presented to our sight, the searchlight of our *ruci* throws its beam on the object and the object, whatever it may be—inanimate or animate—will throw its own *ruci* on our mind's reflector. It is well and good if both the '*ruci*'s, agreeable to that of its own. This agreement or disagreement of *rucis* makes us see beauty or ugliness things. Truly speaking, there is nowhere such a thing as beauty and ugliness except in our mind. Nature has only the *ruci* and its agreement or disagreement which makes us say—this is beauty, this is the beast. Forms may be crooked or bent, straight or tall and not necessarily ugly or beautiful, but the beam of *ruci* which is in us may differ from each other, it may be dull or weak in one, bright or strong in the other and in consequence of their action and reaction on forms both visual and mental, they create the sense of difference, beauty and ugliness for the seers and the seen.

We may note that this note of subjectivity has been gradually subdued and an objective reference has been recommended as the discourse was coming to an end. Abanindranath concludes:⁷⁸

To light all forms with the *ruci* of our mind and to receive enlightenment from the *ruci* emanating from the visible and the invisible, is to gain the true knowledge of *rūpa*. The practice of *rūpabheda* in art is for the enhancement of the light-giving and light absorbing power of the mind. To see not merely with the sight or to paint not with our eyes only, but to see all objects in the light of *ruci* and to paint them with its enlightening touches—this is the law and this is the lesson in *rūpabheda*.

So Abanindranath considered beauty to be the true knowledge of *rūpa*. In beauty lay the true significance of *rūpa*, wherein the outer ray from the object and the inner ray from the mind commingled and got into a synthesised being. Abanindranath quotes from the Hindu *śilpa Śāstra* to illustrate his point:

Rūpabhedāḥ Pramāṇāni Bhāva-lāvaṇya-Yojanam.

Sādrśyaṃ Varnikā-bhaṅgam iti citram Śaḍaṅgakam.

So the ultimate emphasis was on aesthetic fusion of multiplicity in so far as beauty was concerned. But wherein the multiplicity refused to be organised into a tame unity, the sense of the beauty turned into the sense of the sublime. However, we will do well if we try to understand critically the philosophy of *Śaḍaṅga*, as understood and expounded by Abanindranath. If coherence were a principle of explanation for art-activity, the art canons amply demonstrate the validity of the principle. In our traditional prescription (including *rasa* which is the "Great Taste" and *chanda* which is "Rhythm") we get the following eight,* instead of six limbs for our art of painting of which *rūpabhedā* has been discussed above in detail: (a) *Rasa*, the great taste; (b) *Chanda*, rhythm; (c) *Rūpabhedā*, difference of visual forms and the knowledge of appearance; (d) *Pramāṇāni*, correct perception, proportion, measure and structure of forms; (e) *Bhava*, idea of action of feelings, of forms; (f) *Lāvaṇya-Yojana*, infusion of grace and artistic quality; (g) *Sādrśya*, similitude; (h) *Varnikābhaṅga*, artistic manner of using the brush and colours.

Indian and Japanese Art Canons Compared

Tagore, in the set *Śāstric canons*, reads a metaphysical meaning quite consistent with Indian philosophical heritage and there also he betrays that he was a syncretist. His loyalty to Indian traditional explanation has been quite ably linked up with Japanese and Chinese approach to the problem. Tagore tells us that to facilitate clear explanation, let us compare the laws of

*See *Śaḍaṅga: Philosophy of Śaḍaṅga* by A. N. Tagore.

Japan as influenced by the older Chinese art-philosophy with Indian laws of painting.

Let us first of all take *rasa* or the great taste. Mammaṭa, Bhaṭṭa, the author of *Kāvya-prakāśa*, defines⁷⁹ *rasa* as the great taste; *Brahmāsvādam iva anubhāvayan*, i.e., as if elevating our spirit by giving it a taste of greatness. We find that "Ki-In" of Japanese art⁸⁰ conveys the same idea as this *rasa*—"Ki-In", that indefinable something which in every great work suggests elevating sentiment, nobility of soul.

Besides, it is said that *rasa* and "Sa ca na kāryaḥ nāpi jñāpyaḥ". It can neither be demonstrated nor defined, produced or expressed, according to the author of *Kāvya-prakāśa*.⁸¹ *Rasa* is felt, as if palpitating before us—*Pura iva parisphuran*; as if entering and filling our heart—*Hṛdayam iva praviśan*; permeating our whole body—*Sarvāṅgiṇam iva āliṅgan*; as if causing everything else to vanish altogether—*anyat sarvamiva tirodadhat*. Speaking about the "Ki-In" of Japanese art, Bowie has said⁸² (as quoted by Tagore):

From the earliest times the great art-writers of China and Japan have declared that this quality . . . can neither be imparted nor acquired (Sa ca na kāryaḥ nāpi jñāpyaḥ). It is . . . akin to what the Romans meant by *divinus afflatus*, that divine and vital breath which vivifies . . . the work and renders it immortal (*Hṛdayam iva pravṛśan*; etc.).

After the *rasa* comes *chanda* or rhythm. *Chanda* literally means that which gives *Āhlāda* (elation).* *Chanda* is that which makes everything move rhythmically in joyous exultation. Therefore *chanda* in one sense is *Hlādinī Śakti*. In the second chapter, sloka 59 of *Pañcadaśī*, *śakti* is mentioned as moving the otherwise inactive spirit.

Sattatvamāśrītā śaktiḥ kalpayet sati vikriyāḥ
Vurṇā bhittigaṛā bhittau Citraṁ Nānāvidhaṁ yathā.

Sattva (the spirit) remains passive until *śakti* resting on it transforms and gives it movement. Like the white wall the

*See *Śabdakalpadruma* for a fuller explanation.

spirit is colourless, motionless. *Śakti* is the multi-coloured picture resting on a white wall, so the colourness and motionless *sattva* is made to appear as moving and living by the power of this *sakti* which gives movement and colour and form.

Acting on *sat* (spirit) the *śakti* creates rhythmic and living movement. *Hlādinyāḥ sambit āśliṣṭāḥ saccidānandah Isvarah*—adhering to rhythmic stimulation of *Hlādinī Śakti Isvara* is existent, exultant, active and moving. The great spirit which is invisible, *sat*, appears as *cit* and *ānanda* (moving and living) elated as it were by the vivifying influence of *hlādinī śakti* (rhythmic and living stimulus).

In fact *chanda* (rhythm) is the life movement (*cit*) and the elation (*ānanda*) of the spirit (*sat*). The explanation given by Okakura of the first canon of the Chinese Painting (according to Tagore) unmistakably suggests *chanda* or the *hlādinī śakti*. . . . The great mood of the Universe moving hither and thither amidst the harmonic laws of matter which are rhythm.⁸³

The law of "Sei-do" of Japanese art, probably means *chanda*: ". . . This is one of the marvellous secrets of Japanese painting handed down from the great Chinese painters and based on the psychological principles—matter responsive to mind".⁸⁴

Now we come to *rūpabhēda* (discussed earlier), differentiation of visual forms and the knowledge of appearances, the first of our six limbs of painting. It is stated in *Pañcadaśī*, chapter 6, śloka 5, that,

*Brahmādyāḥ Stamba-paryantāḥ Prāṇino'tra Jādā api
Uttamādharma-bhāvena vartante Pañacitravat.*

All forms, great or small, living or non-living are grouped throughout the universe according to the hierarchy of things, just as things are shown on a picture.

This thought of the Vedānta is repeated in the Chinese 5th canon of painting and Tagore quotes them: "Disposer les lingneset leur attribuer leur place hierarchique: Composition and subordination or grouping according to the hierarchy of things".⁸⁶

According to the *Upaniṣads* the formless one is revealed to us in the following different manners:⁸⁷

Yathādarśe tathātmani yathā svapne tathā pitrloke, yathāpsu parīva dadṛśe tathā gandharvaloke, chāyātāpayoriva brahmaloke, (Kaṭhapaniṣad)

Within the *Ātmā* (soul) he is revealed as in a mirror in the world of *pītrs* (ancestors) as merged in dream and imagination, in the world of Gandharvas (celestial musicians) he appears rhythmically vibrated as if seen on the face of moving waters, and in this our *Brahmaloka* (highest to the lowest heaven) he is revealed through the contrast of shade and light.

“He is revealed in the soul as in a mirror” this idea of the *Upaniṣads* is echoed in the Japanese art-philosophy by the word Sha-i, “They paint what they feel rather than what they see but they first see very distinctly” (as if mirrored in the soul).

“Revealed through the contrasts of Light and Shade”, this idea was more clearly defined by the philosophy of the *jīvātmā* and *paramātmā* where the two were described as a pair of *Suparṇa* Birds living in the same tree, one active and eating of the fruit of enjoyment, and the other without eating, without enjoying, sits, inactive facing his companion. The law of “In-Yo” in the Chinese and Japanese art exactly corresponds to the above doctrine of Vedānta. Tagore quotes Bowie⁸⁸ to tell us that

In-Yo . . . requires that there should be in every painting the sentiment of active and passive, light and shade (*chāyā* and *ātapa*) The term In-Yo originated in the earliest doctrines of Chinese philosophy and has always existed in the art-language of the orient. It signifies darkness (*in=chāyā*) and light (*Yo=ātapa*), negative and positive, female and male (*Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*), passive and active (as the two *Suparṇa*-birds) Two flying crows, one with its beak closed, the other with its beak open . . . or two dragons, one ascending to the sky, the other descending to the ocean.

The second law of our six limbs of painting gives us *pramanani*—correct perception, proportion, measure and structure of forms.

Pramā not only determines the length and breadth of a thing but also tells us how far or how near the thing is. This law of *pramā* is practically the same as the "En-kin" of the Chinese art-philosophy.

So far as the perspective is concerned, in the great treatise of Chu Kaishu entitled "The Poppy Garden Art Conversation", a work laying down the fundamental law of landscape painting, artists are specially warned against disregarding the principle of perspective called 'En-Kin' meaning what is far, what is near.⁸⁹

Now about *vyaṅgya* (suggestiveness) which is one of the qualities of *bhāva* (action of feelings on forms) and which takes the third place in our six limbs of painting. Tagore tells that in the first chapter of *Kāvyaaprakāśa*, Manmaṭa Bhaṭṭa says:⁹⁰ *Śabdacitraṃ Vācyacitraṃ abhāṅgyaṃ to avaraṃ smṛtam*. All representations, be they given through the means of sounds or through the means of words, are inferior representations unless there is *vyaṅgya* (suggestiveness) in such representations.

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EPILOGUE

Aesthetic problems as formulated and discussed here in India during this century have been amply reflected in the systems of Rabindranath, Brajendranath, Sri Aurobindo and Abanindranath. They had their own distinct outlook to view and judge the problems involved. Rabindranath and Abanindranath had intuitive apprehension of the problems and their respective points of view were an amalgam of "intuition" and "synthesising ratiocinative process". Their artistic intuition often gave them glimpses of the aesthetic process and their ideas were formulated in a language replete with imageries and analogies. The style has been feeling-oriented, somewhat romantic in character. No logical structure was consciously sought to be built up. But Sri Aurobindo and Brajendranath adhered to metaphysical style of writing, terse, logical, and conclusive. Sri Aurobindo appeared as the tough champion of the ancient Indian aesthetics, in so far as spiritually-oriented idea of art was concerned. His precise and pointed polemics knew their objective and they have been ably used to defend the old aesthetic values as enshrined in Indian epics in stone, in colour, and in words. He found the ultimate value of art in its spiritual significance. Beauty was the gateway to Godhead. This idea was not new with the Tagores. They are believed in such ultimate spiritual significance of art. But Brajendranath was trained in the Hegelian aesthetics, and the Greek and Roman traditions on art and architecture influenced him immensely. He travelled widely in the realms of English literature and European art. His training as a philosopher gave him the critical acumen not found only in Sri Aurobindo. Brajendranath moved on traditional lines of criticism as found in the Western aesthetics. Hegel was his dominant influence and as such some affinity in the approaches of Rabindranath and Brajendranath could be discovered. What Brajendranath thought as a Hegelian, Rabin-

dranath thought as a disciple of the *Upaniṣads*. But we must not overlook the traditional ideas of the Indian aesthetics working on Brajendranath, although Hegel influenced his earlier thinking. Rabindranath (also compared to Hegel for his *Upaniṣadic* ideas, as understood by him) came close to Hegel and the idea of "self-realisation" through the "other" could be read in their systems. Strictly speaking, this self-realisation through the "other" is a realisation of the self through itself, if we care to remember the *Upaniṣadic* teachings of a pantheistic nature. If everything is spiritual, this self-alienation of the spirit and the ultimate self-realisation through the 'other' becomes meaningless in this all-spirit context. 'Beautiful' as the sensuous representation of the Absolute, as understood by Hegel paralleled the spiritually-oriented idea of *Parama Sundara*, as reflected in the beautiful in art and nature (as understood both by Rabindranath and Abanindranath). In the same vein we might suggest an affinity in conceptualising the ultimate significance of art between Aurobindo, on the one hand and Rabindranath, Abanindranath and Brajendranath on the other. The ultimate spiritual significance of art has been unequivocally poised by Sri Aurobindo and deviations therefrom are hardly noticeable in his entire system of aesthetics. Rigours of his logic, both in creative and critical writings, did not allow him to deviate from this pole-star even for a moment. But Rabindranath and Abanindranath had occasions to refer to the 'object of art' as contained within the domain of aesthetics. Purpose of art was contained within the four walls of art as such. Art for them, for a while did not look beyond the bounds of art itself and its significance was sometimes sought there and there alone. Tagore thought of a theory which might parallel the Westerner's pet idea of 'art for art's sake'. This idea in itself seems to be divorced from reality as it considered art and aesthetic activity as completely divorced from the totality of life. That is why the appeal of this idea lacked finality and its advocates often showed a tendency to overcome and go beyond this idea. Tagore told us that the poet sang out of unbounded and unmotivated joy. He never cared to invest his song with any other significance. The poet's business was only

to delight his audience. If there were any purpose, it had its roots in delight and it ended in delight which was communicable and sharable. But this delight or *ānanda* was supra-significant as purpose of art. At times both Abanindranath and Rabindranath spoke of this "purposiveness without a purpose" and invested art with this *ānanda* from which everything sprang up and to which everything returned. Again they spoke of the spiritual significance of art, as bodying forth the *Parama-Sundara*. The empirical utility of art, its didactic character, and its educative value—they have been completely repudiated by the Tagores. But Sri Aurobindo spoke of the aesthetic, the educative and the spiritual value of art. Though art had its ultimate significance in its spiritual value, still it educated people and gave them unbounded joy. In his sense Sri Aurobindo was an eclectic in so far as he accommodated all the possible views on the purposiveness of art. Brajendranath sought to discover the "harmony" in art; this harmony was beauty and the Absolute was the absolute harmony. His modification of the traditional classification of art into classical, romantic, etc., is a pointer to this direction. Dr. Seal's characterisation of *rasa*, the aesthetic satisfaction as "momentary infinitum" betrays the influence of *Upaniṣads* on his ideas of art and aesthetics. He invests the momentary aesthetic experience with "an infinite value" and in this regard, he comes very close to Rabindranath, Abanindranath, and Sri Aurobindo.

This aesthetic joy consists in the successful desubjectification or subjective feelings by the artist and this has been branded as "expression". The concept of "expression" has different bearing with different thinkers and it has been differently conceived. The poetic intuition is just coined into so many beautiful words, and it has been termed "expression". The problem involved herein is: whether this expression and the intuition which it expresses are identical or not? Rabindranath, unlike Croce, told us that expression was the primary aesthetic fact; but there is suggestion in his writings that expression was not only the primary but also the "ultimate" aesthetic fact. To Abanindranath and Brajendranath, this problem was one of synthesis and harmony. Expression and intuition would be harmonised and

blended without leaving a remainder, to make art what it is. The subtle considerations involved in this intuition-expression relation bothered Rabindranath. He considered in detail whether "expression" could be termed "expression" with a remainder unexpressed. His considered opinion on whether a "mute poet" could be called "poet" as such deserves careful consideration by the student of aesthetics. Croce, the noted Italian philosopher, discussed this problem threadbare and his conclusion was that expression and intuition were identical. Abanindranath or Brajendranath like Rabindranath, did not consider intuition to be identical with expression. For them it was important to see how much was expressed through the artistic form. So expression meant for them a successful desubjectification of the intuited image through a proper use of appropriate technique. This cognisance of the importance of technique is discernible in Rabindranath as well. But both Rabindranath and Abanindranath concluded that technique had its limited utility and importance in their scheme of aesthetics. Both of them thought that for a real artist the importance of technique was nil. They concluded that the technique was inherent in the world of art but it was not the determinant of aesthetic excellence, in any sense of the term. This mystic identity of intuition-expression invests technique with an indeterminate character and it becomes metaphysically unrecognisable. This *a priori* identity, if postulated negates the importance of technique and both Rabindranath and Abanindranath, by their non-recognition of the ultimate significance of technique, virtually veered round Croce, when he postulated this non-duality in his idea of the "technique of externalisation". Sri Aurobindo's idea of intuition is metaphysical in character in the sense that it was supra-logical. It gave a synthetic vision of the whole. This aesthetic sense has been a powerful vehicle for the realisation of pure aesthetic joy. Sri Aurobindo tells us that at certain stage of human development aesthetic sense was of infinite value. The sense of good and bad, beautiful and unbeautiful, which afflicts our understanding and our senses, must be replaced by *akhanda rasa*, undifferentiated and unabridged delight. This aesthetic sense should be fully used before "the highest" could be reached.

Sri Aurobindo told us that the free self was the "delight self" and this was a matter of intuition of which our ancient traditions repeatedly spoke. Rabindranath also spoke in the Aurobindean vein. Both Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo had their inspiration from the Upaniṣads and ancient Indian texts and that is why their fundamental agreement on major issues has been striking.

The yogic detachment could be achieved in aesthetic experience, if intuition is so viewed. This detachment makes possible the "harmony" that is found in life and art. And when a person is able to achieve the poetic status, to contemplate and to recreate aesthetically all forms of life and experience, he is strongly filled with and adjusted to the law and harmony. Then he is truly *raséna tṛptah*, poised because of his relish in all that is, because of seeing all things with equal eyes: "The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last". This aesthetic detachment as involved in the aesthetic intuition gave all the world of delight that poetry and art was capable of. And that is how poetry was not merely didactic or utilitarian. Because aesthetic intuition was invested with a type of detachment so very peculiar to art and art alone, Rabindranath, Abanindranath, and Brajendranath unequivocally told us that art had no such final purpose as could be considered "extraneous" to the nature of art qua art. Any such "extraneous" consideration determining the "purpose" and as such the "purposive nature" of art would make art "subservient" and not a "free activity". This idea of art as "free activity" negated at the outset the "copy theory" and that is how "copy theory" did not find favour with any one of the four great Indian thinkers on art and aesthetics, whose views we have discussed at length in the foregoing pages. We have branded both the Tagores as "realists", though their realism greatly differed from the British academic realism. Their "realism" was the realism of "form", the "form" that could hardly be distinguished from the "content" as such.

The form-content relation and the *a priori* distinction inter se possibly led to a "synthetic approach". But Rabindranath's poignant declaration of *Rūpér truth* as the ultimate meaning and reality of art (empirically speaking) led us to

believe that Rabindranath's distinction of "form" and "content" was more apparent than real. The logical culmination of the acceptance of the *a priori* distinction of form and content is a synthetic approach, a postulation of organic relation between the form and content in art. That is how the "undifferentiated unity" of form and content has been stressed. Moreover, the unitary character of the poetic intuition does not leave room for driving a wedge between the form and the content of art. If art-work is a total configuration, a gestalt, it will not allow a hard-and-fast distinction of "form" and "content" as understood in scholastic aesthetics. That is how Brajendranath along with the Tagores spoke of a fusion of form and content, and organic relation that makes the two blend into one. Sri Aurobindo's insistence on that spiritual significance of art and on "harmony" as the essence of all aesthetic activity, point to the self-same direction of non-duality of "form" and "content" in art. They could be distinguished ideationally, i.e., a post mortem examination of an art-work might reveal this duality, although no definite and rounded contour for them could be fixed up as boundaries. On this point, the Tagores, Dr. Seal and Sri Aurobindo, all agree. Because without this "seamless fusion" (if there are form and content in art), no art could possibly be a "unique whole". This idea of "unique whole" again tends to the direction of non-duality of form and content. Abanindranath spoke in unambiguous terms (in fact he illustrated the idea) how "content" was made in the artist's imagination and how the so-called facts of life were presented in art with completely different meaning, connotation, and significance. When Sri Aurobindo reads spiritual significance in art, the art-content drawn from ordinary experience gets completely metamorphosed and its meaning and significance become arbitrary and exclusive. So the dividing line between the "form" and the "content" in art, in such a situation, loses all fixity. Both the form and the content become indeterminate. Brajendranath's acceptance of the ideas of "neo-classic" and "neo-romantic" unmistakably points to the fluid meaning of both the form and the content in art. So it will not be incorrect to observe that the dominant trend in modern Indian aesthetic

thought is to cognise the non-duality of form and content. This non-duality makes the problem of communication more complicated than it is usually understood. As a logical corollary to this position of non-duality, we come to postulate the uniqueness of appeal in art. This aesthetic appeal is different from man to man and hence its uniqueness. This was accepted by the Tagores, by Sri Aurobindo, and by Brajendranath as well.

This position spells for Rabindranath an apparent difficulty when he wanted us to believe that the content of art, i.e. what an art-work sought to express was the "higher nature" in man. This specification of art-content went contrary to our earlier observation on the non-duality of form and content. But Rabindranath's intuited sense of oneness of "form" and "content" virtually took him to the position that anything and everything could be the content of art, when illumined by the artist's imagination. Moreover, if art-activity is spiritual in character or in other words, if art were the handiwork of spirit, the distinction between form and content in art becomes more apparent than real. (This more has been repeatedly sought to be made out.) If everything is spiritual in character, all art-content is spiritual. This position negates at the outset the arbitrary distinctions of "higher" or "lower" in art-content. That is why Sri Aurobindo called poetry, "the poetry of the soul". Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo, both believed in this spiritual goal. Abanindranath and Brajendranath did not lag behind although their kinship in this regard, was not too pronounced. They all wrote of the "sky" and the "nest" being beautiful. Sri Aurobindo quite readily accepts Rabindranath as a fellow-traveller. Let us quote from one of the letters of Sri Aurobindo, written after Rabindranath's death. "Tagore has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way. That is the main thing, the exact stage of advance and putting of the steps are minor matter". Because of this spiritual goal in art, Sri Aurobindo tells us, both Bankimchandra and Rabindranath could mould the contemporary minds of men and women so effectively. Let us quote him over again when he wrote: "Young Bengal gets its ideas, feelings and culture, not from schools and colleges but from Bankim's novels and Rabin-

dranath Tagore's poems; so true is it that the language is the life of a nation". Sister Nivedita saw "this life of the nation" in the language of the brush as used by Abanindranath Tagore.

Now this spiritual ideal is not inconsistent with aesthetic freedom and it does not circumscribe art in any way. Kant perhaps had some such idea in his mind when he called the purpose in art to be "purposiveness without a purpose". This spiritual aim of art is not foisted from without and the evolution in art is an approximation to this ideal inherent in all forms of art-activity. This spiritual ideal has sometimes been identified with *ānanda* and in this *ānanda* all art-activity found its culmination and ultimate significance. This is evident in the systems we have been discussing herein. Tagores and Sri Aurobindo were quite emphatic and Brajendranath was rather pronounced on this issue.

Sri Aurobindo's ideas on art being "spiritually-oriented", his poetry tended towards epic grandeur. He displayed "grand passion" in his poetry and that is how the "depth" of his poetry is immense and unfathomable. He heard the "sounds of the awakening world" when he was a boy of fifteen and that sound-rhythm got eloquent in his entire gamut of writings as years advanced. Rabindranath's "awakening of the falls" gave us similar glimpses of a spiritual awakening which pervaded his entire world of artistic creations, both in colours and in words. Their appeal lay with the initiated. The uninitiated had no access this grandeur and eloquence of art. Our ancient concept of *adhyariveda* in art has been taken up in right earnest both by Abanindranath and Sri Aurobindo. The concept of *sahridaya* appealed to both of them and Rabindranath and Brajendranath also shared the same views. It would be quite interesting to note how Sri Aurobindo spelt out his position in this regard. To quote him: "If I had to write for the general reader, I could not have written 'Sabitri' at all. It is in fact for myself that I have written it and for those who can lend themselves to subject-matter, images and technique of mystic poetry". So in a way, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath, Abanindranath, and Brajendranath, all four agreed that art was not the common *rendezvous* for all men. The traditional Indian concept of '*Sāhitya*' also

points to the same direction. People of similar training and temperament could go along the path of poetry to reach identical goals. Abanindranath, we remember, emphasised the necessity of training and of creating a temperament suited to art-appreciation proper. He told us that a mere book-learning of the alphabets does not entitle one to read and appreciate Shakespeare. That needs emotional integration with Shakespeare himself. The truth and the ideal, that Shakespeare visualised must be visualised by the reader of Shakespeare. According to Sri Aurobindo, poetry to be the vehicle of this "great truth" would aspire to be *mantra*. That is how he came to define poetry as a rhythmic speech which rises at once from the heart of the seer and the distant house of truth. This "idea" of "art as *mantra*" implies the communicability of art only to the initiated. He alone can know the truth and see the vision of the artist, if he is a *sahridaya*. If not, he fails to get into the world of art as created by the artist. The appeal of art falls flat on the uninitiated and as such ancient Indian *ālamkārikas*, like the moderners, refused as appeal to the *arasikéśu*.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the greatest poets are those who had a large and powerful interpretative and intuitive vision and whose poetry arose out of the revelatory utterance of it. For him, intuition was interpretative, it makes patent the meaning and significance of the "intuited image". It chooses its own vehicle and the vehicle to be appropriate to the content expressed, tends to be "classical". May be, Brajendranath thought of the "neo-classical" to stress this very point. Hegel's idea of the sublime compares favourably with this Indian concept of the failure of form to grapple with the grandiose content. This pre-supposes the traditional idea of form-content duality. The realism of poetry chooses its own vehicle. That is how Abanindranath had explained the transformation of real content into aesthetic content in the most mysterious fashion that human imagination could conceive of. We have discussed earlier the type and nature of realism as we found in both the Tagores. Brajendranath as a poet gave us symbols (real in their appearance) representing some spiritual values. Their apparent referents were real in the ordinary sense of the term; but in

essence they enjoyed a type of supra-reality which belonged to the mystic plane. Sri Aurobindo as a poet had great affinity with Brajendranath in this regard. He was a poet of the earth as well. But this "earthiness" was transformed into "life divine" through the alchemy of the mystic intuition. Brajendranath's poem, "The Quest Eternal", discussed earlier may be ranked as "poetry of the soul" so very evident in both Rabindranath's and Sri Aurobindo's poetic creations. All the three poets went through the traditional phase of poetry as understood by the ancient Indian aesthetics—the moral, the intellectual and the empirically real phases—and they reached beyond these phases. Herein they followed the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*, and they were in the happy company of Asvaghosa and Sankaracariya. Ultimate poetry for them was "vision language" and this "sign language" bodied forth the vision of the poet, which was the characteristic power of the poet as such. Poets' "own vision" gave them their own "aesthetic principles" and these aesthetic principles as found in Rabindranath, Sri Aurobindo, Brajendranath and Abanindranath had a close resemblance as they had a common social and spiritual ethos to live in. Their uniqueness did not rule out resemblance as they breathed the same spiritual air in similar social ethos. But this "common legacy" and "common feeders" did not blur their distinctiveness in ideas. All these great aesthetic thinkers had their own aesthetic ideas which we have discussed in their difference and in their agreement as well. Their distinctive aesthetic ideas only proved the veracity of Sri Aurobindo's poignant observation. "It has been the rule that great poets should look for their own aesthetic principles and that they should become to this extent philosophers and borrowers of philosophy".

Thus the philosophies of art and beauty as found in the two Tagores, and in Brajendranath and Sri Aurobindo were very much allied in their fundamentals as they borrowed from the same storehouse of Indian civilisation and culture, which was essentially spiritual in outlook and approach. When it was said that man was not a moral Melchizedek and that he must live, move and have his being in a society, we nodded in approbation and readily accepted the idea that moral behaviour pre-

supposed communication. This communication was equally vital for aesthetic ideas and this was responsible for the close affinity in the ideas of Rabindranath, Abanindranath, Sri Aurobindo and Brajendranath when they enunciated their philosophies of art and beauty.

We may note here in passing that none of them disregarded and overlooked the importance of the "empirical" in art although their outlook was spiritually oriented. "A blade of grass", "a scrap of paper" and thousand other trifles of life were important for them for they bore the hall-mark of spirit. This was an end imbedded in the thing in itself and as such external and extraneous to itself. It was also in keeping with the traditional *upanishadic* legacy. Rabindranath, like Sri Aurobindo, was unequivocal in his profession of this *upanishadic* ideal of the spirit which gave modern Indian aesthetics its "spiritualistic bias", thereby leaving nothing behind and beyond the scope of art as everything was considered "spiritual" on ultimate analysis. Rabindranath's address to the world, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday unequivocally spelt out his thesis of *Pasya devasya Kavyam*, wherein he discussed the fullness of nature through intuition. This "fulness" did not pertain to matter; but it was essentially spiritual in character. This note recurred in Abanindranath and in Brajendranath as well. Brajendranath's formulation of the differentia of *ānanda* as differentiating art from craft is a pointer to this type of spiritual demarcation, close to the traditional *upanishadic* thinking. Brajendranath told us that *rasa* or the "aesthetic enjoyment" was fundamental for all forms of aesthetic activity. All types of art were marked by this *ānanda* as their essence; the media is employed and used in different arts only help to give the arts their different labels. His idea of the "final art", i.e., poetry spells its supremacy over other forms of plastic and vocal arts by its superior capability of exciting *rasa* with the help of these "other forms" of fine arts.

This spiritual reorientation focussed a common faith in the efficacy of art as a moral force, though art had no distinct and professed purpose to reform society morally; of course Sri Aurobindo invested art with such a purpose to be subsumed

under a greater purpose that is spiritual in essence. But the Tagore and Brajendranath, all three believed in a moral ethos intimately related to the total personality of the artist, which was expressed in art. Thus art, being the desubjectification of the subjective world-view of the artist (this includes both feeling and intellection aspects) reflects this moral ethos and makes art moral. That is how the noted philosopher Benedetto Croce came to agree with the view that art was moral, though it was not the "conscious purpose" of art; herein the neo-idealist Croce came very near the dominant trend in modern Indian thinking on art and aesthetics, as found in Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath, Brajendranath and Abanindranath. Herein these Indian thinkers line up with the most ardent logical mind of the West who ever thought and wrote on aesthetic problems in recent times.

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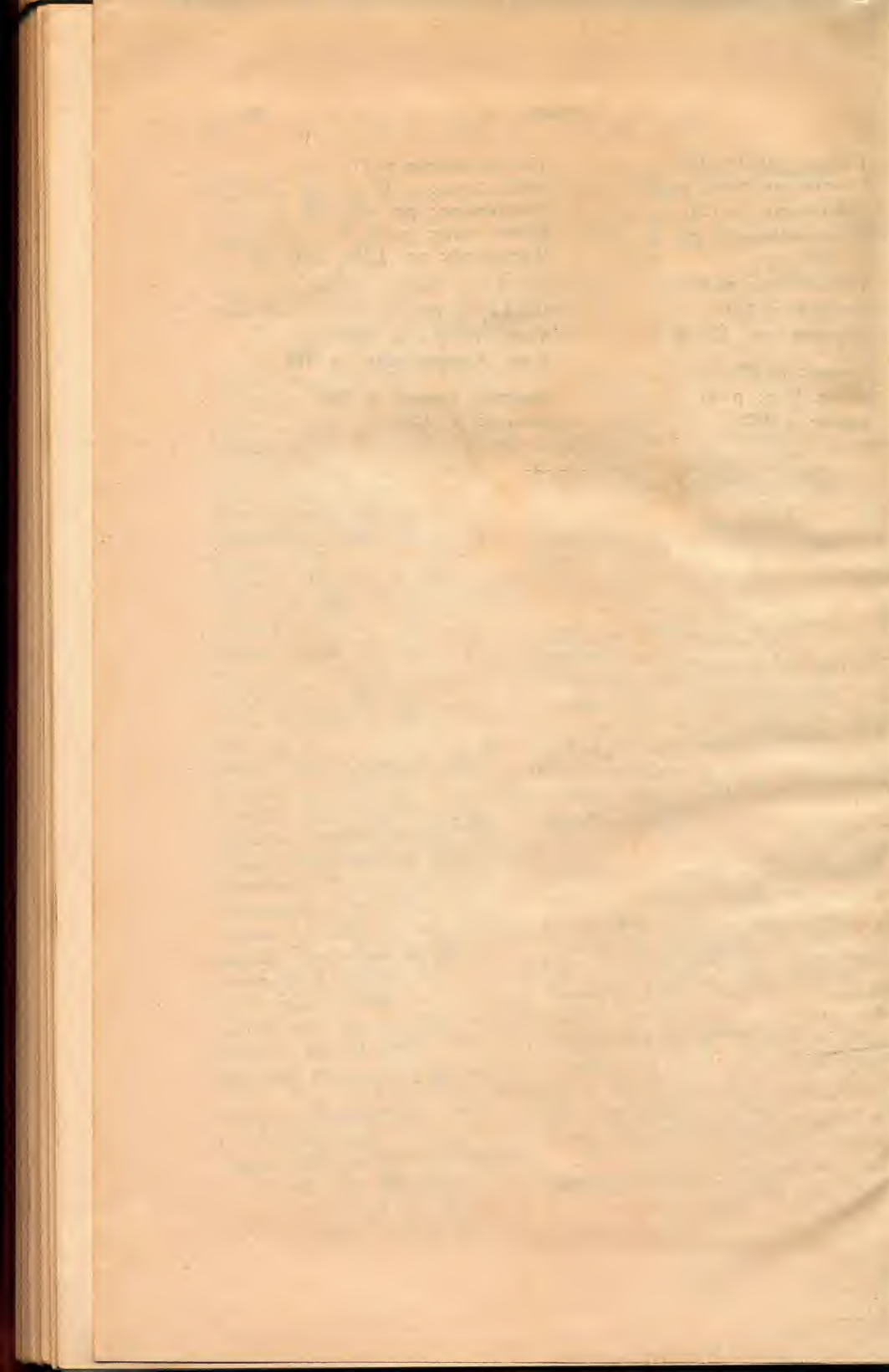
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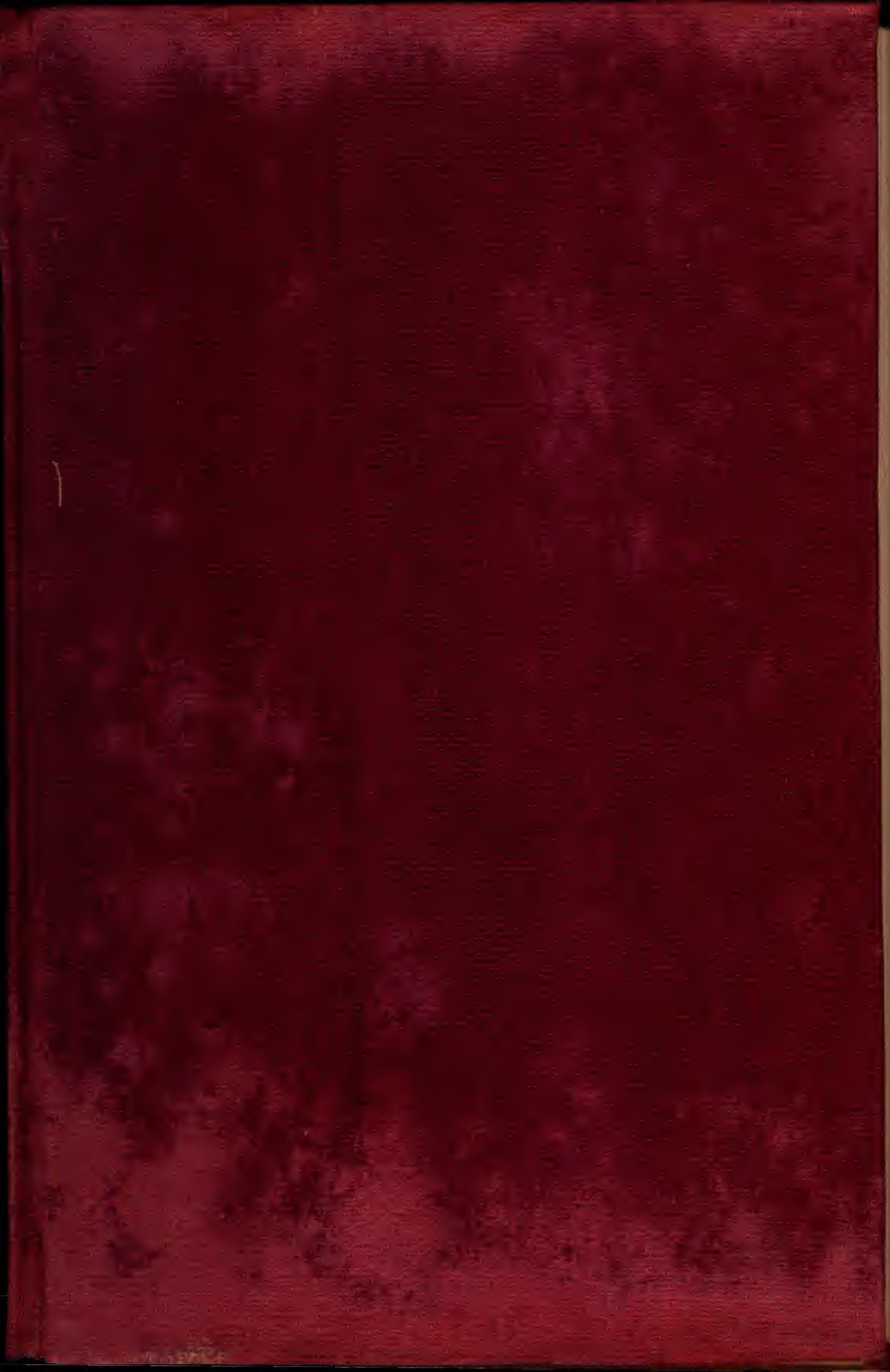
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This image shows a circular diagram, possibly a calendar or astronomical chart, from a manuscript. The diagram is composed of a red outer ring with yellow rectangular labels containing text in Devanagari script. The labels are arranged in a circular pattern, with some text appearing to be in Sanskrit or Hindi. The diagram is partially cut off on the right side.